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December 2012
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MIDDLE EAST

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For more information, contact us at 04-4350201, fb.media@rotana.com

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BBC GoodFood MIDDLE EAST

PUBLISHER Dominic De Sousa
GROUP COO Nadeem Hood

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHERS
Alex Bendiouis
Carol Owen
Georgina Wilson-Powell

EDITORIAL
EDITOR: Sudeshna Ghosh
sudeshna@cpidubai.com
ASSISTANT EDITOR: Nicola Monteath
nicolam@cpidubai.com
DESIGNER: Odilaine Salalac Mejorada
PHOTOGRAPHERS: Cris Mejorada, Anas Cherur

ADVERTISING
SALES DIRECTOR: Carol Owen
carol@cpidubai.com /+971 55 8803817
SALES MANAGER: Rekha D'Souza
rekha@cpidubai.com /+971 55 8904696

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS
Marizel Salvador
marizel@cpidubai.com

ONLINE
Louie Alma

PRODUCTION
Devaprakash

DISTRIBUTION
Rochelle Almeida
rochelle@advancemena.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS
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BBC Worldwide Magazines Unit:
MANAGING DIRECTOR: Nicholas Brett
PUBLISHING DIRECTOR: James Hewes
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR: Jenny Potter
UNIT COORDINATOR: Eva Abramik

Immediate Media Co.
CHAIRMAN: Stephen Alexander
DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Peter Phippen
CEO: Tom Bureau
HEAD OF LICENSING AND SYNDICATION: Joanna Marshall
INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS MANAGER: Aleksandra Nowacka

UK Good Food Team
EDITOR: Gillian Carter
CREATIVE DIRECTOR FOOD GROUP: Elizabeth Galbraith
FOOD DIRECTOR FOOD GROUP: Lulu Grimes
PUBLISHING DIRECTOR: Alfie Lewis

Welcome!



I grew up celebrating Christmas the German way, thanks to my aunt Ute from Hamburg. Some of my most favourite childhood memories include enjoying a delicious afternoon tea with delectable iced cookies and cakes on Christmas Eve, after which we opened all the presents piled up under the tree. We would also perform the nativity for the family, which always involved a lot of planning and giggles. Our festivities continued into Christmas Day, which was always a double celebration for us, being my dad's birthday too, and the 25th afternoon would always find us in a food coma after an elaborate turkey lunch. As we grew older, I remember the focus of the excitement changing to last minute gift shopping and wrapping frenzy, and lots of hushed secrecy before the big day!

Shopping for presents can quickly turn excitement into exasperation however, and we recognise that. So, we've taken the stress out of festive shopping with our comprehensive gift guide for foodies (*That's a wrap!* p27) that covers all budgets. In fact, we've literally got Christmas covered in this issue – from the ultimate Christmas Day menu (*The big day*, p52), and scrumptious festive baking (*Let it snow*, p64), to tips on stylish festive table setting and stress-free entertaining (*Deck the table*, p82 and *Your party-planning timeline*, p87). There's also our pick of festive dining out options in the UAE (*Flavours of the month*, p18), and practical ideas for using up the inevitable leftovers you'll end up with from your festive feasts – I hate wastage! – on p76, giving you all the inspiration you need for the festive season, in these pages.

Our festivities are going to continue well beyond December however, with things really hotting up for the *BBC Good Food ME* 2012 awards. If you want to stay on top of all the action, turn to p78 to find out how you can book yourself a seat at the gala night on January 30, 2013 (hurry and get yours before they sell out), and who the finalists are!

In the meantime, enjoy the festive spirit of the season, have a very merry Christmas and a wonderful start to 2013.

See you in the New Year!

Sudeshna

Editor's picks



I love these quirky storage solutions from our gift guide – is someone taking the hint?! p27.



Easy yet impressive starters are a must for anyone who enjoys entertaining, and I do! p46.



I found the gorgeous table setting ideas from interior designer Kelley Norman inspiring, p82.

BBC GoodFood MIDDLE EAST

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BBC GoodFood MIDDLE EAST

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WIN!

Our recipe descriptions

V Suitable for vegetarians
❄ You can freeze it
Not suitable for freezing
Easy Simple recipes even beginners can make
A little effort These require a bit more skill and confidence – such as making pastry
More of a challenge Recipes aimed at experienced cooks
Low fat 12g or less per portion
Low cal 500 calories or less per main.
Superhealthy Low in saturated fat, 5g or less per portion; low in salt, 1.5g or less; and at least one of the following: provides one-third or more of your daily requirement of fibre, iron, calcium, folic acid and/or vitamin C, or counts at least one portion of your recommended 5-a-day fruit and veg.
Good for you Low in saturated fat, low in salt.
Heart healthy Low in saturated fat, with 5g or less, and low in salt, with 1.5g or less, and high in omega-3 fatty acids
1 of 5-a-day The number of portions of fruit and/or veg contained in a serving
Vit C **Iron** **Omega-3** **Calcium** **Folate** **Fibre** Indicating recipes that are good sources of useful nutrients

Some recipes contain pork & alcohol. These are clearly marked and are for non-Muslims only. Look for this symbol:
P contains pork
contains alcohol

Your say

We love to hear from you!



SOMETHING FOR EVERY OCCASSION

I picked up my first copy of the magazine this month and truly glad I did! My mother and I love cooking together, and tend to catch up on each other's lives while doing so. While flipping through the pages, I came across a pork recipe, and was surprised and excited at the same time – I knew I just had to give it a go! It's great that you include symbols that indicate pork and alcohol in the recipe. Apart from the magazine being a great read, I like that there is a variation of healthy and comfort food recipes – this is great for me as I love drawing up weekly menus, and indulging over the weekends.

Blair Gammelgard

MORE VEGETARIAN PLEASE!



First of all I would like to thank you for providing awesome recipes that suit all taste buds. The magazine inspires me to try various recipes for my family and friends, and I like the fact that many of the recipes carry the nutritional value, as it offers an added advantage for the readers if they are health conscious. Nowadays many people are choosing to be vegetarian, so I would like to request you to please include more meals and desserts that are meant for vegetarians as well. Can't wait for the next issue of *BBC Good Food ME* to hit stands.

Manju Asarpota

Star Letter

GOOD FOOD FOR GOOD WEATHER

The weather is starting to get better, so that means it's alfresco time! The perfect time to dust off the grill, set up tables in the lawn and invite relatives and friends to share the new recipes that I have learned from the November issue of *BBC Good Food ME*. Every first week of the month, I look forward to receiving a copy of the magazine and cook up the delicious recipes by simply following the easy methods. What makes it rewarding and fulfilling – especially for a beginner like me - is when I see smiles and hear praise from my family and friends who have enjoyed eating the meals I have prepared. I can proudly say that I tried the Lemon and garlic chicken (*John's big cookout*, November 2012) and it was a big hit! A recipe worth sharing with everyone I know.



Donna Tuazon Padua

Win!

The writer of the Star Letter wins a fabulous **Dankotuwa dinner set from Jashanmal,** worth **Dhs 1,690!** One of the world's finest porcelain brands, it is not only elegant, but also has very high whiteness, translucency, and resistance to chipping and scratching making it the ultimate accessory for stylish entertaining.



A CULINARY STORY



I have been reading, learning new recipes, cooking, and enjoying every page of the marvellous magazine *BBC Good Food ME*. With the turn of every page, a new story unfolds and I can't help but marvel at the mouthwatering pictures of the dishes. I love looking out for the healthy recipes, tips, new gadgets on the market, and your opinion of restaurants on the *Tried and Tasted* page. I tried the Shahi tukra recipe, from the contemporary section of your Diwali feature (*Light up your dinner table*, November 2012) and must say it was delicious. The best part of the magazine is that along with food, amazing travel spots such as Paris (*48 hours in bargain Paris*, November 2012) are covered too! I would like to send out a heartfelt thanks to all the wonderful people behind these pages.

Neha Dadlani

A JOB WELL DONE

I am a regular reader of *BBC Good Food ME*, and enjoy the hard work put into the magazine by the editorial team. Apart from it being a good read, I like taking part in the competitions as there are tons of prizes to be won in every issue. Keep up the good work!

Sidrah Kanwal

TALK TO US!

Email us on feedback@bbcgoodfoodme.com with your thoughts, views and comments.

You can also connect with us on facebook: **www.facebook.com/bbcgoodfoodme**

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Or, you could write to us at:
The Editor
BBC Good Food Middle East.
Dubai Media City, Building 4, Office G08
PO Box 13700, Dubai, UAE.

We asked you...

Facebook poll

What is your favourite main course to indulge in, on Christmas Day?

58% Turkey

38% Duck

4% Chicken



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Christmas Celebrations At Sofitel



Treat Your Loved Ones To A Festive Christmas

BUON TALE IN ROCOCO RESTAURANT - DECEMBER 24TH

TOAST THE NIGHT IN SOPHISTICATED STYLE AT ROCOCO TO CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS

AED 350 - 5 COURSE SET MENU WITH SOFT BEVERAGES
AED 500 - 5 COURSE SET MENU WITH UNLIMITED SELECTED BEVERAGES

CHRISTMAS DAY BRUNCH IN AOC FRENCH BRASSERIE - DECEMBER 25TH

WAKE UP TO A JOYOUS CHRISTMAS WITH A GLORIOUS BRUNCH FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY

AED 250 - GRAND BUFFET WITH SOFT BEVERAGES
AED 350 - GRAND BUFFET WITH UNLIMITED SELECTED BEVERAGES

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Life is Magnifique!

Foodie file

What's hot and happening in the culinary world, here and around the globe.



DINE IN THE CITY

✳ Looking for a casual spot that serves everything from Thai and Chinese to Vietnamese and Japanese under one roof? Sizzling Wok at Citymax Bur Dubai (shown here) ticks all the boxes. With enticing aromas wafting through the air, and dishes cooked with a contemporary flair, here you can savour Far-Eastern specialities including Malay chicken curry and fried fish in Mandarin sauce. Call 04-4078000.

✳ Eating with a conscience is now easier than you think! The new cafe at sustainable solutions store, The Change Initiative, serves up delectable lemon cheesecake, pizzas, quiches, soups and salads – all made with sustainable produce. Call 800-TCI (824).

✳ Make a beeline for Mövenpick Hotel Jumeirah Beach's stylish hub, Chinwaggery – derived from the British word 'chinwag', which means to chat – for after-work drinks, accompanied by a round of oysters on the rocks, and cheese and cold cut platters. It's the ultimate chill-out-and-chat spot! Call 04-4498888.

FOODIE SOCIAL HUB

The latest online concept to hit Europe is Casameals.com. Social media meets culinary skills on this unique website through which home cooks can turn their kitchens into a virtual bistro for people to come and enjoy home-cooked meals, pick up a takeaway meal, or even order for home delivery. Whether you want to use it as an alternative to eating out at restaurants, or showcase your own cooking skills, it's a great way for foodies to meet like-minded people.

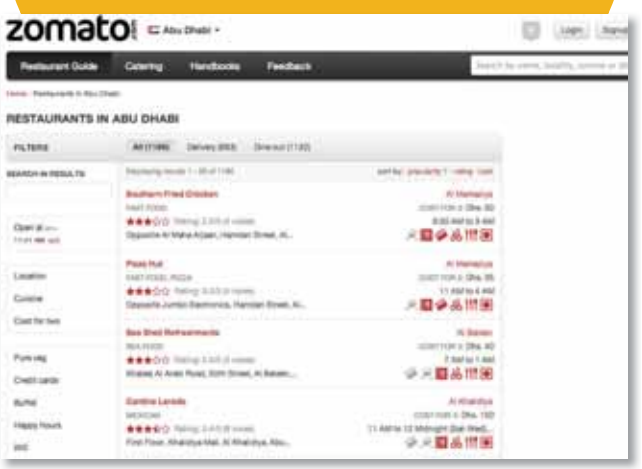


It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas!

The festive season is here! And what better way to celebrate than by visiting the Dubai Christmas Festival? It's a 3-day extravaganza at the Dubai Media City Amphitheatre taking place from December 6-8, where you can participate in cookery classes and décor workshops, watch the tallest tree in the Middle East being lit up and sing Christmas carols. Don't forget to try out the food and beverage offerings (don't miss the mulled wine and hot chocolate!) from various restaurants, shop at the Christmas market, and of course, stop by the *BBC Good Food ME* stand! Dhs30 for adults and Dhs20 for kids, visit dubaichristmasfestival.com for more info.

APP–ETISING!

New age technology has made dining out easier than ever! Zomato, South-Asia's largest restaurant and nightlife guide, has recently launched its Dubai app and website, with plans to expand to Abu Dhabi and Sharjah soon. The restaurant finder site lists over 4,000 restaurants in the city, providing menus, price points, photos, and locations with GPS coordinates for each outlet. Look out for the *BBC Good Food ME* restaurant reviews coming soon exclusively to the site. Download it on Windows Phone, BlackBerry, iOS, Android and I-Phones, and head out!





Love that lunch!

Planning a lunch meeting with the team? Let Jones the Grocer's gourmet lunches come to you. Their new corporate catering menu includes fresh, delicious sandwiches (pastrami and gruyere baguette with rocket and horseradish sauce, or grilled halloumi baguette with roasted pepper and sundried tomato pesto, anyone?), cheese platters, salads and sweet treats such as macarons and brownies. Options such as gluten-free bread also available, prices start at Dhs180 (for 4-6 people). Call 800Jones.

GOURMET INSPIRATION



If you find grocery shopping a hassle and never have time to try new recipes, check out Dinner Time, a new Swedish culinary concept now launched in Dubai. Sign up on dinnertime.me, and each week, you will receive a box of ingredients with recipes and four menus, at your doorstep. Cooking up wholesome meals was never easier! Prices start at Dhs380 for 16 meals for four adults.



Don an apron

Enrol yourself in a culinary class at one of these new entrants in Dubai's culinary scene:

✳ Scafa, The school of culinary and finishing arts recently opened its doors in Jumeirah Lake Towers has state-of-the-art infrastructure, and an in-house French bistro serving up delicious gourmet cuisine. They offers three professional courses for those looking to pursue a career in the field, as well as 25 learner courses. Visit www.scafa.ae.

✳ Grab a few friends for a fun experience at the 'Chef to be' class at stylish cooking studio Top Chef (shown here), or get the little ones in the kitchen with you on a Saturday afternoon, and cook up a lunch that you can sit back and indulge in at the dining room. From Dhs350, call 04-3855781 for schedules and timings.



This just in:

This vintage-style 2 tier New country roses polka blue cake stand is all the excuse you need to host your own girlie afternoon tea party! Dhs475 at Jashanmal Home Stores.

"A recipe has no soul. You, as the cook, must bring soul to the recipe."

- American chef and writer Thomas Keller,

Be charitable this festive season

Alessi, the Italian kitchen utensil company, has launched a Christmas campaign 'Alessi for Children' which builds homes for children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Make your contribution by purchasing an Alessi product from Tavola or any store around the world; one euro from each purchase will be donated to the project, which was launched by Crusinallo, a construction company.

SAVE THE DATE!

Block these dates – February 5 to 20 – on your calendar, for Gourmet Abu Dhabi, which is back for the fifth year in a row. The 16-day event will take place across 20 restaurants at some of the finest hotels in the capital and will include master classes, demonstrations and culinary promotions, driven by 14 international celebrity and guest chefs.



Festive Season

at Radisson Blu Hotel, Dubai Media City

Whether you are planning a dinner on Christmas Eve or a brunch on New Year's Day, our chefs have created a delightful spread throughout the holidays.

Santa has confirmed that Radisson Blu Hotel, Dubai Media City is on his schedule and that a sack load of gifts will be delivered for the children.

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Aisle file

Gorgeous gourmet buys, kitchen gear, foodie accessories, home décor and more.



Who says kitchen clocks need to be boring? This vintage-style Princess wall clock will add Parisian glam to your home. Dhs249, at **HOMES R US**.



Sweeten up your festivities with these delectable treats from **PAUL CAFE**. Grab a latte and indulge in an assortment of macarons, le sapin (fir tree-shaped brioche), le pain platine (crusty crunch with soft centre) and freshly baked chestnut and orange bread.From Dhs19 per piece.



These gorgeous handmade patchwork coasters will add a funky touch to your coffee table. Dhs100, for a set of six, at **RAGMATAZZ**.



This funky Dice tray and glass set is sure to become a conversation-starter! Dhs125 at **UNITED FURNITURE**.



It's time to get roasting! This Rectangular roast pan with metal rack, is a must-have for winter cooking. Dhs55, at **HOME CENTRE**.



Caffeine aficionados can add a quirky touch to their kitchen walls with this Coffee sign plate. Dhs299, at **THE ONE FUSION.**



Add a sparkling touch to your festive table with these golden Jhali nampkin ring. Dhs19, at **THE ONE**.



Serve drinks in this vibrant Arabic marriage tray at your next party, and impress your guests! Dhs430, at **O DE ROSE**.



These colourful rubber Measuring mates, Dhs42 each, at **HARVEST HOME**, are multi-tasking marvels that allow you to not only measure out ingredients accurately, but the brush also doubles up as a basting brush.



As the festive season draws nearer, cosy up on the couch and indulge in a warm cup of Joy McStevens candy cane cocoa mix. Don't forget to drop in a few marshmallows on top! Dhs39, at **CANDELITE**.

Compiled by NICOLA MONTEATH

Tried & tasted

Each month, we review two of the city's top tables.

Steakhouse





Where: MJ's steakhouse, Madinat Jumeirah
What it's like: Striking that perfect balance between being unpretentious, and elegantly luxurious, the award-winning restaurant in the Al Qasr hotel boasts a glamorous interior with its New York-style decor and bright red accents. But, with a cool evening breeze beckoning, my dining partner and I opted to sit on the outdoor terrace. I was surprised with the amount of non-meat choices on the menu, particularly when it comes to seafood. Which is why we chose to follow the restaurant team's recommendations and opted for the scallops – which are listed as mains on the menu, but can also be served as starters – and crab cakes. The baked scallops with caramelised onion gratin and endive salad were served on a bed of salt in their own shells, and was one of the most beautifully presented dishes I've ever seen, with flavours to match. The crab cakes, while delicious in their own right, sadly paled in comparison to this star dish!

We couldn't not have steak for our mains, with such premium steaks on offer, so I chose the organic, grass-fed tenderloin fillet from Australia, while my friend opted for a beef wellington – which we were promised is the best in Dubai. With sides of dauphinoise potatoes, creamed spinach and broccolini with confit garlic, and a choice of four different sauces as well as a variety of mustards, we had a spread on our table. My steak was as tender and juicy as it gets. The beef wellington, a difficult dish to get right for the best of chefs, was juicy and cooked to perfection.

Best for: A relaxed yet stylish meal

Too full to order individual desserts, we opted to share a key lime crème brulee, which offered the delicious light relief we needed after that man-sized meal.

If you want to go: Around Dhs850 for two, without drinks. Call 04-3668888.

- Sudeshna Ghosh

Where: JW's Steakhouse, JW Marriott Hotel Dubai
What it's like: When you enter the restaurant, you might feel as though you are being seated at an extravagant living room in a jazz lover's country home, or perhaps the set of The Godfather! Popular amongst Dubai's steakhouse stalwarts, JW's exudes an old school charm, complete with plush leather armchairs, parquet flooring, walls filled with frames, a faux fire place, a vintage gramophone and dim lighting.

Any thoughts of laying off the carbs and calories were tossed aside for the night. Upon looking at the meat-loaded menu – which is engraved on a large plank of wood – the pan seared foie gras seemed rather appealing, and while I'm not a fan of the foie gras ethics, I couldn't hold back. To say the portions are generous is an understatement. My starter came out in four thick slabs, with a side of sweet pear salad and caramelised onions – the buttery texture of the foie gras was perfectly complemented by the sweetness of the sides. My partner chose the iced jumbo prawn cocktails which looked as stylish, served in a margharita glass, as it tasted good. For mains, I settled for the Wagyu ribeye steak, being a fan of the succulent meat, cooked at medium rare temperature. Each slice melted in my mouth and was as easy to slice as butter. My partner tried the surf and turf offering and was pleased as to how juicy both the lamb chops and king prawns were. For sides, we ordered a plate of asparagus with hollandaise sauce and potato and onion gratin – a recommendation from the waiter – which was rich and creamy.

Best for: A classic steakhouse experience

The sound of a dessert and aperitif trolley rolling by usually excites me, but we decided to opt out as we were simply too full.

If you want to go: Around Dhs1,000 for two, without drinks. Call 04-6077977.

- Nicola Monteath



* Prices are per person

It's that magical time of the year... Come, relax in the festive, cheerful ambience... Dine on exquisite cuisine... We've wrapped up a tree-full of Christmas *surprises.*

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Flavours of the month

Our pick of the best Christmas and New Year activities, takeaway offers, and festive deals this month.



The Ritz-Carlton Dubai, Jumeirah Beach Residence

Kick-start the festive season by taking the kids to watch the stunning Christmas tree brighten up with lights at The Lobby Lounge, after which you can sit back and sip a cuppa at their afternoon tea, while listening to Christmas tunes. Those who want to bring out the culinary talent in their kids can book them in for a gingerbread house decorating class. *The afternoon tea is available on December 8, from Dhs62 per head, and the Gingerbread house decorating class is available every Saturday. From Dhs225 per child, call 04-3994000.*

Shangri-La Hotel Dubai

Witness the Christmas tree lighting ceremony, as you sing carols and stroll around the festive market, while sipping on mulled wine and hot chocolate. *Available on December 9, Call 04-3438888.*

Sheraton Abu Dhabi Hotel and Resort

Santa's got a gift for everyone at the Gingerbread factory, so grab the kids and let them get enthralled by the Christmas tree lighting ceremony, decorate their own gingerbread houses, sing Christmas carols and treat themselves to sweet and savoury snacks. *Available on December 11, from Dhs120 per child and Dhs75 per adult. Call 02-6773333.*

Al Mahara, Burj Al Arab

For a special treat this New Year's eve, head to the iconic hotel and begin a lavish evening with a champagne reception at Sahn Eddar (world's tallest atrium) before feasting on a 6-course gala dinner menu of international seafood cuisine. Gear up for the spectacular fireworks display at the stroke of midnight, and listen to tunes played by the harpist while the kid's take a trip around the Charlie and the chocolate factory themed entertainment area. Babysitting service is also available if required.
Available on December 31, from, Dhs7,450 per adult and Dhs2,500 per child. Call 04-3017600.

Dusit Thani Dubai

If you're looking for a midday or midnight festive treat, head to the 24 hour deli and try the hot chocolate, mince pies, yule logs and fresh gingerbreads. *Call 04-3433333.*



Center Cut, Ritz-Carlton DIFC

Treat your family to a traditional four-course dinner, with highlights on the menu including sous vide fennel with poached apple, parsley puree and dill crème fraiche; slow-cooked turkey with all the trimmings; and seared foie gras. End the meal with a warm, decadent pie with berry compote and vanilla cream.
Available on December 24 and 25, from Dhs350 per head. Call 04-3722222.

Segreto, Madinat Jumeirah

Savour a four-course dinner of authentic Italian specialties, in this secluded restaurant nestled along the waterways of the enchanting resort. *Available on December 25, from Dhs400 per head. Call 04-3666730.*

Raffles Dubai

Put on your finest threads and head to the Raffles ballroom, which will be transformed into a winter wonderland for the day. Dine at the terrace overlooking the gardens, and enjoy the Christmas day roast as well as a range of European dishes including Finnish hot smoked salmon. You can also roam around the market stalls and check out the gingerbread houses, while kids get a visit from Santa himself.
Available on December 25, from Dhs375 per head and Dhs190 per child (ages six to 11). Call 04-3248888.

Saffron, Atlantis The Palm

With over 20 cooking stations to try, this contemporary-style buffet brunch and dinner offers the best of international and Asian cuisine. Whet your appetite with starters from The Ice Bar offering fresh sushi and seafood, but leave room for mains such as roasted crunchy pork belly, ribs and Asian dishes from the hawker noodle and wok station.
Available on December 25, from Dhs220 per head. Call 04-4262626.

✳ The Address Montgomerie

Don't wait till the last minute and pre-book your turkey from their well-known kitchen, with all the traditional trimmings included.
From *Dhs800 per turkey, call 04-3905600.*

✳ Reflets Par Pierre Gagnaire, InterContinental Dubai Festival City

For a more sophisticated feast, opt for a French goose stuffed with foie gras, or try out the traditional stuffed roasted turkey with sides including sweet and sour braised red cabbage, mashed potato and cranberry chutney or Roasted beef striploin with Yorkshire puddings (sides included).
From Dhs790 for a 4kg turkey. Call 04-7011111.

✳ Jumeirah Etihad Towers

Munch on sweet and savoury treats including mince pies, festive logs, puddings, cakes while you order a roast turkey with mashed potato and trimmings, all sold at the Hamper shop.
Prices start at Dhs795 for 6kg turkey. Call 02-8115666.

✳ Chef's House, Radisson Blu Hotel, Dubai Media City

Who says the party ends with New Year's eve? The Morning After brunch offers a refreshing take to the start of the year with dishes from cuisines as varied as Indo-Thai, Italian and Japanese.
Available on January 1, from Dhs199 per head. Call 04-3669111.

✳ The Market Café, Grand Hyatt Dubai

Set foot into the New Year by eating a healthy breakfast and lunch buffet spread of dishes from international cuisine.
Available on January 1, from Dhs135 per head. Call 04-3171234.

✳ Mango Tree, Souq Al Bahar



If you've had enough turkey, and are looking for a twist to this year's New Year's eve dinner, then this is the place to be! With over seven courses to feast on, you can savour grilled rib eye beef salad for starters, corn fed chicken breast braised in massaman curry sauce or the vegetarian-friendly fried white tofu on a bed of Thai kale with hot basil, garlic and red chilli sauce.
Available on December 31st, from Dhs895 per head. Call 04-4267313.

✳ Fairways, The Westin Abu Dhabi

Fireworks, free-flowing bubbly, carved meats, seafood and desserts! Go all out and end the year with an extravagant buffet, while gazing out at the greens and getting entertained by the in-house band.
Available on December 31, from Dhs350 per head. Call 02-6169999.

Steak out

Celebrate the festive season with a steak to suit every taste at Chili's.


Chile Steakhouse Ribeye


Chile Garlic Top Tenderloin

Chili's has introduced a new Ultimate Steaks menu for the holidays, combining bold seasonings and mouthwatering sauces with tender cuts of meat. Fusing the brand's signature Southwestern-American flavors with local taste preferences, the Ultimate Steaks menu features unique seasonings and rubs, as well as smoked meats made in-house daily.

With its intense flavours, the menu is sure to tempt steak lovers and steak novices alike. Head to Chili's with family and friends this holiday season, and find a steak to please everyone.

IF YOU WANT A LIGHT BITE:

Smoked Steak Salad – Crisp lettuce tossed with sundried cranberries, julienned apples, sliced red onions, croutons and bleu cheese crumbles. Drizzled with a savoury citrus balsamic vinaigrette and topped with tender strips of beef steak and house-made pico de gallo. For a healthier twist, you can also try the salmon version.

IF YOU WANT A HEARTY, YET HEALTHY MEAL:

Chile Garlic Top Tenderloin – Juicy tenderloin steak seasoned with garlic-chile rub, topped with garlic-pepper sauce and green onions. Served with spicy pepper Jack mashed potatoes and steamed veggies.

IF YOU WANT AN INDULGENT TREAT:

Chile Steakhouse Ribeye – Tender ribeye steak seasoned with a garlic-chilli rub, topped with a garlic-pepper sauce, crispy onion strings and green onions.

IF YOU WANT AUTHENTIC FLAVOURS:

Utlimate Smoked Tenderloin Steak – Juicy tenderloin steak seasoned with smoked paprika, topped with house-made pico de gallo and cilantro. Served with spicy pepper Jack mashed potatoes.

The 'Ultimate Steaks' menu is available to dine-in or carryout guests. Chili's is a top casual dining restaurant chain and the flagship brand of Saleh Bin Lahej Group-Hospitality Division, one of UAE's leading holding companies. Chili's offers a fun, energetic atmosphere and a distinct, flavorful mix of Southwestern-inspired, classic American favorites – all perfectly blended to satisfy international tastes. Chili's serves guests in 20 restaurants around the UAE, 50 throughout MENA region and across the world in 33 countries.

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Life is Magnifique!

Flavours of the month

This month's top restaurant promotions.

✴ Boxing Day brunch

The day after Christmas can sometimes be a lazy one. Get into the spirit of Boxing Day by dining at The Talk, Mövenpick Hotel Jumeirah Beach, and enjoying a selection of barbecue foods including succulent meats, tender grills, sausages and a wide range of seafood.
Available on December 26, from Dhs150 per head. Call 04-4498888.

✴ Luxury dining

Make your way down to the luxurious Desert Palm resort and breathe in the fresh air, while enjoying views of the lush polo fields, before tucking into the offerings at the Vintage Friday brunch. Expect lots of live cooking stations, including a foie gras station, and half a bottle of bubbly per person, plus wine pairings and cocktails.
Available every Friday, from Dhs395 per head. Call 04-3238888.



✴ Weekend treat

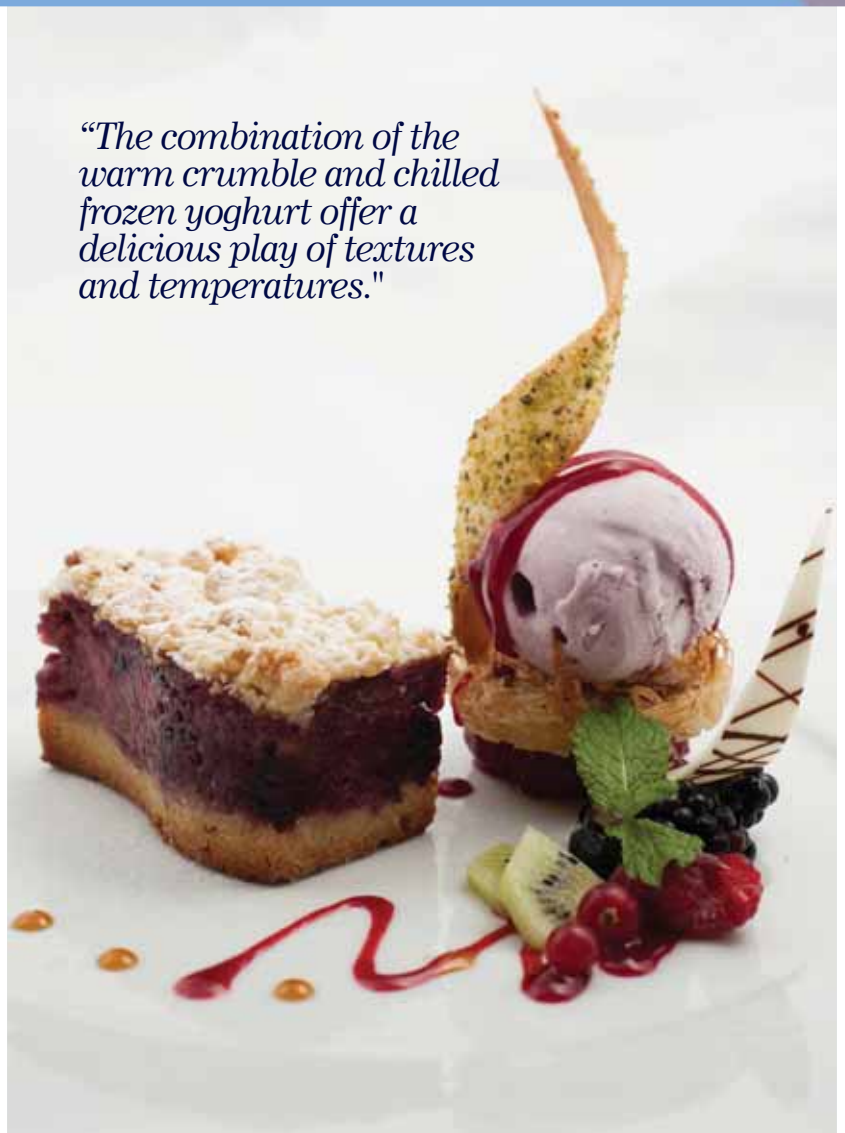
Brunch outdoors? Yes, please! Mina A'Salam's brunch has expanded to the great outdoors – taking full advantage of the cooler days – and is now offering a sumptuous buffet of foods from The Wharf, Al Muna and the latest addition to the brunch, Zheng He's. Tantalise all senses with classic English pub cuisine with a contemporay twist, an assortment of seafood delights and Chinese specialties. Quench your thirst at the slushie station before refilling your plate with grilled foods made on the spot. Kids get to have their bit of fun by feeding the turtles.
Available every Friday, from Dhs375 per head and Dhs220 for children (Free for eight and below). Call 04-3666730.

✴ Latin American gourmet

Discover argentinian cuisine and some of the country's finest wines at the exclusive fortnightly tuesday-night wine pairing evening at this authentically stylish restaurant. Marina, the engaging sommelier takes you through the different wines being served, weaving in entertaining stories into her talk, which you enjoy with traditional dishes like ceviche, empanadas, and the hero dish, black aberdeen angus beef steak with a delicious chimichurri sauce.
Dhs600 per person, call 04-4227898.

Berry blast

Pastry chef Anura Kumara Silva from Kempinski Palm Jumeirah prepares a warming, seasonal dessert that is perfect for this month. Top it up with a scoop of berry yoghurt ice cream to make it a healthy, yet festive, sweet treat.



"The combination of the warm crumble and chilled frozen yoghurt offer a delicious play of textures and temperatures."



Chef Anura Kumara Silva

Warm berry crumble with berry yoghurt ice cream

INGREDIENTS

250g all-purpose flour
250g light brown sugar
125g granulated sugar
10g ground cinnamon
1 pinch salt
60g cold butter, cut into small pieces
Mixed berries
250g granulated sugar
20g corn-starch

METHOD

1 Preheat oven to 175C.
2 In a large bowl combine flour, brown sugar, ¼ cup of the granulated sugar, cinnamon and salt, to make the crumble. Slowly add in the butter and mix well using a pastry blender or your hands. Keep refrigerated until ready to use.
3 In a large bowl combine berries, ½ cup sugar, and corn-starch, and toss a few times.
4 Evenly divide the fruit mixture between six ramekins. Top with crumble and bake until top is golden and fruit is bubbly (about 35 mins).
5 Serve warm with a scoop of London Dairy yoghurt ice cream, and chopped fresh fruits for garnish.

Make this with:



1 Granulated sugar, and not powdered sugar, is important for baked desserts like this one.



2 Cinnamon adds that festive flavour to the crumble.



3 You can garnish with any fruit that you like, kiwis are a healthy choice.

LONDON DAIRY

BERRY DELIGHT

The antioxidant properties of blueberries and freshness of strawberries with low-fat yoghurt ice cream makes this a healthier dessert.

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Here to help

Our expert chef Andy Campbell offers practical advice to tackle all your cooking dilemmas.

Q When I cook mussels at home, they usually taste gritty – as though sand is still in it – no matter how many times I wash it. However, when I eat mussels in restuarants, it is not gritty at all. Please give me a few tips on how to clean and cook them, as well as remove excess saltiness?

A. Cooking with mussels can be tricky but when done right, it is worth the effort. When buying mussels, you will notice that a mussel that is full of grit will be much heavier than the rest, and when tapped on a surface, it will open – do not buy these. They should not smell of ammonia and the shells should be closed completely, only to open when being cooked – discard any unopened shells when cooking. Avoid buying dredged mussels as they can be gritty. Clean mussels in a bowl of cold water. Once they are cleaned, rinse in three more changes of water and drain well before cooking.



Q How do I make my cranberry sauce less runny and sour?

A. The festive season is here, and cranberry sauce is of course, a must during this time of year, whether you're pouring it over turkey, ice cream and using as a drizzle for cakes. The key to making it sweet is by boiling a cup of orange juice and a cup of sugar on a medium heat, allowing it to cool a little before adding the fresh cranberries. The syrup will help to stabilise the sauce and give you a sweet flavour.

Q I enjoy making it at home on weekends, but they always turn soggy. Is there a trick to keeping them crisp?

A. Hash browns can taste quite dreadful when they are soaking in oil. To get them to stay crisp, add salt to freshly grated good quality potatoes and then drain the potatoes by squeezing out the excess moisture using a potato ricer. Allow potatoes to dry on paper towels, as it is important for them to be as dry as possible. Once they are dry, shallow fry in canola oil or pomace oil, and drain again on kitchen paper, until ready to serve.

Q How do I keep a pumpkin pie crust from cracking and splitting on top?

A. A lot can affect the crust of a pie – the temperature, cooking time and the way the dough has been made. After rolling out your pie lid evenly, allow your pastry to rest for at least one hour in the refrigerator before covering the pie – this will let the pastry contract and avoid shrinkage. After placing the crust on top of the pie, cut a small slit into it to allow the steam to escape. Glaze with a concoction made with a tablespoon of excess pastry flour mixed with milk – the solution should be of the same consistency as double cream. This gives the crust a protective glaze and should keep it from splitting.



Q I love the smoky flavour that you get from chicken and naans cooked in a tandoor. Is there any way to replicate this at home?

A. A tandoor oven is either gas fired or traditionally fuelled by charcoal. Try using a BBQ with a lid and lump wood charcoal. This will get the high temperature used in tandoori cuisine and the flavour you want.

Andy's ingredient of the month



My ingredient of the month is game – pheasant and venison. Venison is an excellent source of protein and iron, and has low saturated fat content, as well as vitamin B12, which helps promote a healthy heart as well as increases energy levels. I love to eat this with a side of local root vegetable chips, and mashed potato with white truffles.

Got a cooking question you need answered? Write in to us at **feedback@bbcgoodfoodme.com**.
To find out more about Chef Andy, visit chefandycampbell.com.

On test: Microwave ovens

Essential home gadgets reviewed.



Sharp AX 1100 steam microwave

This innovative new-to-the-market product can be used for everything from simply heating, to grilling and steaming in the microwave itself. The sleek, minimalist design looks stylish in any kitchen – with the choice of a red or silver strip around the bottom – while being spacious inside, and offers good value for money.

What we liked: The gadget's three main functions – microwave heating, steaming and grilling, are easy to use. The steaming option was perfect for those who like to eat healthy. The oven comes with two in-built trays, which can be used for steaming, say, vegetables and fish simultaneously – all the flavours stay intact, the smells don't cross over, the food is well-cooked, and cleaning up afterwards was a breeze, as no extra utensils were needed for cooking. Extremely easy to use, with its one-touch functions, the gadget is perfect for daily use for the whole family. It comes with a recipe catalogue which includes a variety of dishes that can be cooked in the oven, such as the salmon fillet and tortellini with cheese sauce.

What we didn't like: There was nothing in particular that we didn't like, although if a baking option was included, that would make it the ultimate gadget for the kitchen.

To buy: Dhs1,325, available at Cosmos, Bur Dubai and other leading appliance stores.

User tip
Don't forget to empty the water compartment for the steamer needs completely, before grilling, for the grill to work properly.



LG Lightwave convection oven

Microwaves are sort of a hit-or-miss, but one take look at the big, yet easily portable, LG microwave and you'll know you are investing in an efficient appliance. With its glossy all-black colour and traditional-style oven door, the microwave not only has a range of user-friendly features, but it is also energy-efficient and simple to use. Its key features include grill, convection cooking, and a combination of both, plus steam and defrost options.

What we liked: Living in today's day and age, where we re-heat almost everything we eat in a microwave, it's good to know that this microwave's energy is converted into heat when food is cooked in it – this means there is no energy left over (which can harm food when you eat it). When we tried roasting chicken – on the crisp tray – the flesh was cooked inside at the same time it was on the outer surface, cutting down cooking time, in half. This was thanks to the charcoal heater function, which cooks food evenly with water heat absorption – giving the dish foods a charcoal grill touch and keeping it crisp on the outside and tender on the inside. Our other favourite feature was the steam cover and plate, while a child lock option is also available. Plus, the appliance comes with a recipe book with recipes supplied from three Michelin-starred chef Guy Martin, to make gourmet cooking even easier.

What we didn't like: The plug wire is a bit short and as a result, it needed to be placed close to an electric circuit.

To buy: Dhs1,299, available at leading home appliance stores.

User tip
Read through the manual carefully to find out about the cooking times and modes for different foods.



Terim Term34FF microwave convection grill oven

The fact that this isn't just a microwave – offering convection grill options too – really upped the usefulness of the product. The Terim packs a whole raft of features into its family-sized stainless brushed steel casing body, including a handy auto cook menu, at an affordable price.

What we liked: In general, I think most of us tend to use a microwave to either warm up a cup of tea or coffee or zap pop-corn, which is why other functions come handy when it comes to actually cooking in the microwave. We used it for everything, from roasting chicken to baking potatoes. One of our favourite features was the Crusty option, which ensures pizzas, toast and traditional oven bakes don't go soft; this feature is also great for re-heating leftovers, as toppings on dishes like lasagna and grilled cheese toasts remain crispy. It was great to see that the food didn't get hard or overcooked, as they often do in a regular microwave. Other features included in the microwave are the auto-defrost, which is great for quick defrosting of frozen foods.

What we didn't like: The various settings can be a bit tricky to get right when you're using the appliance for the first time, and more detailed instructions would be useful. The oven isn't a small device either – it takes up a lot of counter space, particularly in a small kitchen, but if you're using it instead of a conventional oven, then this is a small payoff.

To buy: Dhs749, available at Better Life stores.

User tip
The oven makes a speedy, easy cake – definitely worth a go.



Showcase your pastry skills this festive season as Mazina ends the year with its biggest weekend brunch challenge yet. With amazing prizes up for grabs, join forces with another family member to decorate a traditional gingerbread house with coloured icing and sweet treats to create an edible work of art. Feast on a lavish buffet spread of seasonal delights and international classics while Wii games, face painting and a bouncy castle amuse our younger guests for all-round festive family fun.

Date: 15th December 2012
Time: 12.30pm to 3.30pm
Special price: AED 220 including soft drinks
Children aged between 7-12 years enjoy meals for half the price and under 6 years dine with our compliments

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Asian Brunchini at Dunes Cafe

Enjoy the sights and sounds of authentic Asian cuisine. Sample dishes from Indonesia, Thailand, China and Vietnam every Friday, from 12:00 to 16:00. Try the tempting Peking duck rolls or indulge in a maki and sashimi platter, made to order at the sushi station. What's more, you can enjoy unlimited specially created Asian house mixes as well as grape beverages. Come along and try this sensational new brunch concept – only at Shangri-La. Priced at Dhs 330 per person.





Weekend Tapas Bar at Amwaj

If you're looking for the perfect venue to catch up with friends, visit Amwaj on a Thursday or Friday night where you can enjoy a selection of six tapas, including oysters and a glass of sparkling wine for only Dhs 99 per person.

Styled as a seafood bistro, Amwaj offers succulent live shellfish and the finest fish from around the world. Each product is meticulously selected and prepared with passion for quality by our team of chefs. To complement the experience, look out for the chef's specials and set menus with pairing wines from our cellar. Try out the new menu with tantalising new seafood platters, such as the 'You and Me' platter with lobster thermidor, oysters, prawns and fish.

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SNOWMAN COOKIE JAR, Dhs55 at Home Centre



GOURMET GLAM HIGH HEEL CAKE SERVER, Dhs79 at Virgin Megastore



HOUSE OF TUDOR TEABAGS, from Dhs25 at all leading supermarkets



TUSCAN TRADITION PIZZA PLATE, Dhs29 at Think Kitchen





CHRISTMAS RECIPE BOOKS, Dhs89 each at Ace Hardware



KISS N PEEL VEGETABLE PEELER, Dhs55 at Virgin Megastore



GLASSES IN BUCKETS, Dhs90 at O' de Rose

GOLLES RASPBERRY VINEGAR, Dhs74 at Chezcharles.ae



HOLIDAY SNOWFLAKES BOWL (SET OF 3), Dhs79 at Crate & Barrel



BIGLIE DI CIOCCOLATO CHOCOLATE BALLS, Dhs45 at Carluccio's



RED TEA LIGHT HOLDER, Dhs25 at Home Centre



MAZMA METAL CANDLE HOLDER, Dhs79 at Home Centre



PIE POP SET, Dhs245
at Harvest Home

MIDNIGHT HOUR HAUTE COUTURE TEA, Dhs135
at TWG TEA Salon



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Dhs300 and under



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at VintEdge Decor





CREME BRULEE GIFT SET 6PCS, Dhs240 at Tavola



DIPTYQUE SAPIN DORE SCENTED CANDLE, Dhs299 at Harvey Nichols



ROBIN BEAKER CANDLE, Dhs195
at Harvest home



VALROHNA GRAND CRU GUANAJA CHOCOLATE GIFT BOX, Dhs133 at Chezcharles.ae



FESTIVE PLATE SET: YULE PLATE, Dhs 19, **NORDIC SNOWFLAKE PLATE**, Dhs 35, **RED TREE PLATTER**, Dhs89, at Crate & Barrel



PENHALIGONS NEROLI CLASSIC CANDLE GIFT BOX, Dhs210 at Harvey Nichols



ZWILLING J.A. HENCKELS BAMBOO CUTTING BOARD, Dhs190 at Tavola



SUE ICE BUCKET, Dhs299 at The One



RED REINDEER NUTCRACKER, Dhs105 at Harvest Home

ARMANI DOLCI HOMEMADE PRALINES GIFT BOX, DHS175, at Emporio Armani Caffe & Armani Dubai Caffe





LA VELA FRANKINCENSE AND MYRH SCENTED CANDLE, Dhs150 at O de rose



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MASILA BLACK DANCERS COFFEE CUPS (SET OF 6), Dhs435 at aurab.com

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SUE GOLD TRAY, Dhs399, at The One



IL PORCINO PORCINI GIFT BOX, Dhs305 at Carluccio's Deli



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RIMAL GLASS & COASTER, Dhs650 at Harvey nichols



PAXTON & WHITFIELD CHEESE AND KNIFE SET dhs349, at Lakeland

For that special someone
Blow the budget



LE CREUSET CASSEROLE, Dhs1,280 at Tavola



CRISTOFLE NEST BOWL, Dhs8,670 at Cristofle stores



BUGATTI TOASTER, Dhs1,075 at Jashanmal



JUNE LANE DINNER SET, from Dhs125 per piece at Kate Spade



WEBER GENESIS GAS GRILL, Dhs6,835, at Ace stores



KITCHENAID MAJESTIC YELLOW ARTISAN STAND MIXER, Dhs2.599 at Al Ghandi electronics



TURQUOISE BOWL, Dhs3,295 at Villari



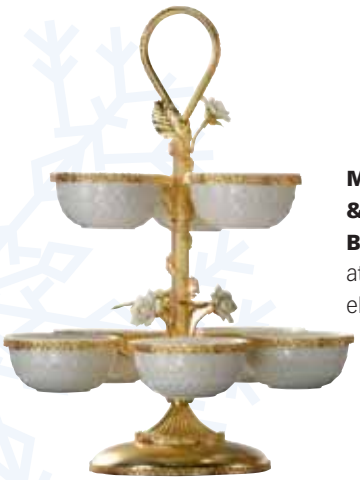
WATERFORD LISMORE MARTINI GLASS (SET OF 4), Around Dhs3,790 at Harrods.com (shipping charges extra)



NESPRESSO U COFFEE MACHINE, Dhs1,095 at Nespresso boutiques



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Pistachio & raspberry pithiviers, recipe p71

Home Cooking

Inspiring recipes for easy everyday meals and stylish weekend entertaining

IN THIS SECTION



* Mid-week meals that only take half an hour, **P36**



* Your complete Christmas menu, sorted **P52**



* Smart ideas for reusing festive leftovers, **P76**

Ready in 30

Five speedy after-work suppers, one for each day of the week.

Recipes KATE CALDER Photographs MAJA SMEND



Dijon and honey glazed chicken and watercress salad

SERVES 2 ● 30 MINUTES ● Easy

1 tbsp plus 1 tsp Dijon mustard
1 tbsp plus 1 tsp runny honey
2 skinless chicken breasts
1 tbsp white wine vinegar
Extra-virgin olive oil
100g watercress
½ small red onion, finely sliced
½ cucumber, seeds removed and sliced

1 Mix 1 tbsp of mustard with 1 tbsp of honey and a drizzle of oil, and season.
2 Spread all over the chicken. Heat a griddle to hot. Griddle the chicken on both sides until cooked through, about 7 minutes on each side. Leave to rest for 5 mins, then slice at an angle. Mix the vinegar with 1 tbsp olive oil, the remaining mustard and honey, and season. Toss the chicken with the watercress, red onion, cucumber and dressing, and serve.

PER serving 288kcals, protein 33.4g, carbs 15.4g, fat 10g, sat fat 1.6g, fibre 1.7g, salt 1.2g



Leek, mushroom, and spinach soufflé omelette

SERVES 1 ● 25 MINUTES ● Easy

2 handfuls spinach
Butter
Olive oil
1 small leek, sliced
Chestnut mushrooms a handful, chopped
2 eggs, separated
1 tbsp parmesan finely grated

1 Put the spinach in a sieve and pour over boiling water. Cool and squeeze out moisture.
2 Heat a little oil in a non-stick pan, add a knob of butter, the leek and mushrooms, and cook until soft. Remove and keep to one side.
3 Whisk the egg yolks with 1 tbsp of water in a bowl and season. Whisk the whites until they form soft peaks and fold them into the egg yolks, keeping in as much air as possible. Add more butter to the pan, then add the eggs. Cook for 1 minute or until the base is set, then put the mushroom mix, spinach and cheese on half the omelette. Flip the bare half over. Cook for a few minutes, then serve.

PER SERVING 279kcals, protein 19g, carbs 3.1g, fat 21.1g, sat fat 8.1g, fibre 2.9g, salt 0.7g

Styling ARABELLA MCNIE | Food styling KATE CALDER

Warm roasted veg with spiced crushed chickpeas

SERVES 4 ● 30 MINUTES ● Easy

1 small butternut squash, chopped into bite-sized pieces
1 cauliflower, broken into small florets
2 large parsnips, quartered lengthways
Olive oil
1 tsp cumin seeds
1 tsp crushed chillies
Chickpeas 2 x 400g tins, drained and rinsed
4 tbsp low fat plain yoghurt
Flat-leaf parsley a small bunch, roughly chopped
Coriander a small bunch, roughly chopped
Rice, couscous or flatbreads to serve

1 Heat the oven to 220C/200C fan. Toss the squash, cauliflower florets and parsnips with 2 tbsp of olive oil and season. Spread out on a large baking tray. Cook in the oven for 25 mins until golden and completely cooked through.
2 Lightly toast the cumin seeds and chillies. Add half of them to a pan with the chickpeas and heat through. Roughly crush the mixture using a potato masher and keep warm. Mix the rest of the cumin and chillies with 2 tbsp of olive oil and seasoning to make a dressing. Stir the yoghurt and the herbs into the chickpeas and season. Serve the veg with the crushed chickpea and a drizzle of the chilli dressing. Serve with rice, couscous or flatbreads.

PER SERVING 408kcals, protein 15.5g, carbs 46.9g, fat 14.7g, sat fat 2.3g, fibre 11.1g, salt 1.1g





Stem ginger salmon with garlic pak choy

SERVES 2 ● 30 MINUTES ● Easy

2 skinless salmon fillets, 150g each
2 stem ginger balls (also known as preserved ginger), cut into small matchsticks plus 2 tbsp syrup from the jar
2 tbsp dark soy sauce
vegetable oil
1 clove garlic, sliced
2-3 heads pak choy, or a 235g pack, roughly chopped
Sesame oil
250g basmati rice pack microwave

1 Heat the oven to 200C/180C fan. Put the salmon fillets in the middle of a large square of baking parchment spaced 5cm apart and put in a roasting tin. Divide the stem ginger between the tops of each fillet and fold up the sides of the parchment ready to seal. Drizzle 2 tbsp of ginger syrup and 2 tbsp of soy sauce over the fillets and then seal the parcel. Cook in the oven for 15 minutes or until just cooked through.
2 Heat a little vegetable oil in a pan. Add the garlic and the white parts of the pak choy to the pan and cook until tender, about 5 minutes. Add the green pak choy tops and a drizzle of sesame oil and cook for a further 2 mins. Cook the rice following the package instructions.
3 Serve the salmon with the pak choy, rice and a drizzle of the juices on top.

PER SERVING 560kcals, protein 37.6g, carbs 59.2g, fat 20g, sat fat 3.9g, fibre 3.3g, salt 3.4g



Meatballs in hot pepper sauce with orzo and rocket

SERVES 2 ● 30 MINUTES ● Easy P

300g lean pork mince
1 tsp fennel seeds
1 lemon, zested and juiced
Olive oil
1 small onion, chopped
1 clove garlic, crushed
1 x 400g tin chopped tomatoes
Golden caster sugar pinch
A handful of Peppadew peppers, some torn in half
100g orzo pasta
2 handfuls rocket

1 Mix the mince with the fennel and lemon zest and season. Form into 18 walnut-size balls. Heat a little oil in a pan and brown the meatballs. Remove from the pan and add the onion and cook until softened, then add the garlic and cook for 1 minute. Add the chopped tomatoes and a pinch of caster sugar and bring to a simmer. Add the meatballs back to the pan as well as the peppers and cook for 15 mins.
2 Cook the orzo following pack instructions. Drain and then mix with the lemon juice, 1 tbsp of olive oil, the rocket and seasoning. Serve the meatballs and pepper sauce with the orzo.

PER SERVING 532kcals, protein 37.9g, carbs 48g, fat 21.2g, sat fat 6.3g, fibre 4.1g, salt 0.5g GF

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Go with the grain

It's never been easier to get hold of interesting grains to use in your meals. Here are five new recipes to inspire you to cook with them.

Recipes JENNIFER JOYCE Photographs HOWARD SHOOTER



Quinoa stew with squash, prunes & pomegranate

SERVES 4 ● PREP 15 MINS ● COOK 40 MINS Easy V Low fat Low cal 2 of 5-a-day Iron

1 small butternut squash, deseeded and cubed
2 tbsp olive oil
1 large onion, thinly sliced
1 garlic clove, chopped
1 tbsp finely chopped ginger
1 tsp ras el hanout or Middle Eastern spice mix
200g quinoa
5 prunes, roughly chopped
Juice 1 lemon
600ml vegetable stock
Seeds from 1 pomegranate
Small handful mint leaves

1 Heat oven to 200C/180C fan. Put the squash on a baking tray and toss with 1 tbsp of the oil. Season well and roast for 30-35 mins or until soft.
2 Meanwhile, heat the remaining oil in a big saucepan. Add the onion, garlic and ginger, season and cook for 10 mins. Add the spice and quinoa, and cook for another couple of mins. Add the prunes, lemon juice and stock, bring to the boil, then cover and simmer for 25 mins.
3 When everything is tender, stir the squash through the stew. Spoon into bowls and scatter with pomegranate seeds and mint to serve.

PER SERVING 318 kcals, protein 11g, carbs 50g, fat 9g, sat fat 1g, fibre 6g, sugar 20g, salt 0.5g



Pork with sweet & sour onion sauce

SERVES 4 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 20 MINS Easy P Good for you

250g mixed basmati and wild rice
600g pork fillet, cut into 4cm-thick slices
2 tbsp coarse black pepper (freshly ground)
2 tbsp olive oil
1 large red onion, halved and sliced
150ml cider vinegar
75ml maple syrup
Small bunch parsley, chopped

1 Boil the rice in plenty of water, following pack instructions, until cooked. Drain, return to the pot and cover to keep warm.
2 Meanwhile, sprinkle the meat on all sides with the black pepper and some salt. Heat 1 tbsp of the oil in a large frying pan. Sear the meat on both sides until nicely browned. Remove from the pan.
3 Add the remaining oil and the onion to the pan. Cook for 5 mins, then pour in the vinegar and let reduce for 1 min. Stir in the maple syrup, then return the pork to the pan and heat for 5 mins until cooked through. Serve the pork and sauce spooned over the rice and scattered with the parsley.

PER SERVING 574 kcals, protein 41g, carbs 61g, fat 16g, sat fat 4g, fibre 3g, sugar 15g, salt 0.2g

Bulghar & spinach fritters with eggs & tomato chutney

SERVES 4 ● PREP 20 MINS ● COOK 20 MINS Easy V Low cal Iron Folate 2 of 5-a-day

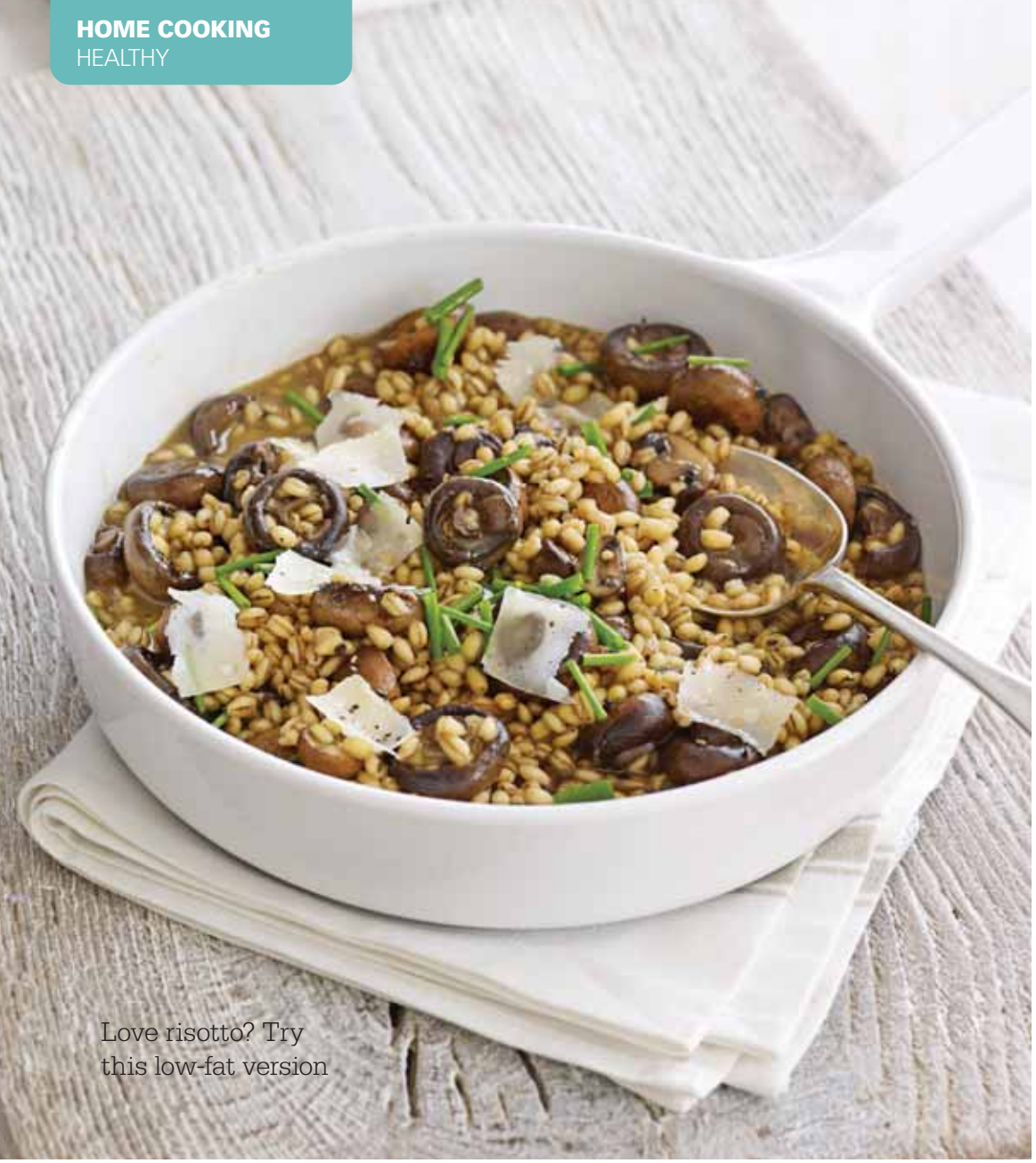
100g bulghar wheat
250g spinach
2 tsp ground cumin
1 onion, finely chopped (reserve 2 tbsp for the chutney)
1 garlic clove, chopped
85g fresh breadcrumbs
5 eggs, 1 beaten
1 tbsp vegetable oil, plus extra
FOR THE CHUTNEY
5 tbsp sugar
50ml white wine vinegar
2 tbsp finely chopped onion (see above)
250g cherry tomatoes, halved or quartered
Salad leaves, to serve

1 First make the chutney. In a small saucepan, heat the sugar, vinegar and some salt. Boil for 1 min, then add the onion and tomatoes. Simmer for 1 min, then remove from the heat and set aside.
2 Boil the bulghar wheat in plenty of water until tender – about 5 mins. Drain well and tip into a bowl. Put the spinach in a colander and pour over boiling water from the kettle to wilt. Cool under the cold tap, then squeeze out as much water as you can. Chop and add to the bulghar with the cumin, onion, garlic and breadcrumbs. Tip half into a food processor and blitz until it forms a chunky paste. Return to the remaining half with the beaten egg and some seasoning. Mix together, then shape into 8 patties and chill until ready to cook.
3 Heat oven to 200C/180C fan. Heat the oil in a wide frying pan, preferably non-stick, and fry the fritters in two batches until crisp on both sides. Meanwhile, lightly oil a 4-hole Yorkshire pudding tin or 4 small ramekins and put in the oven to warm up for a few mins. Remove and carefully crack the remaining eggs into the holes, then bake for 3-4 mins until done to your liking. Use the tip of a knife to help lift out the eggs, then serve with the fritters, chutney and salad leaves.

PER SERVING 465 kcals, protein 18g, carbs 63g, fat 16g, sat fat 3g, fibre 4g, sugar 30g, salt 1.0g



Healthy alternative to hash browns or potato cakes



Love risotto? Try this low-fat version

Barley, chicken & mushroom risotto

SERVES 4 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 50 MINS Easy Low fat Good for you 1 of 5-a-day

1 tbsp each butter and olive oil
2 large shallots, finely sliced
1 garlic clove, chopped
3 skinless chicken breasts, cut into chunky pieces
300g pearl barley
250ml white wine
400g mixed wild and chestnut mushrooms, chopped
1 tbsp thyme leaves
1l hot chicken stock
3 tbsp grated Parmesan
Snipped chives and Parmesan shavings, to serve (optional)

1 In a large heavy saucepan, heat the butter and oil. Sauté the shallots and garlic with some seasoning for 5 mins, then stir in the chicken and cook for 2 mins.
2 Add the barley and cook for 1 min. Pour in the wine and stir until it is absorbed. Add the mushrooms and thyme, then pour over ¾ of the stock. Cook for 40 mins on a low simmer until the barley is tender, stirring occasionally and topping up with remaining stock if it looks dry. Remove from the heat and stir in the grated Parmesan. Serve immediately, with chives and Parmesan shavings scattered over, if you like.

PER SERVING 564 kcals, protein 42g, carbs 61g, fat 12g, sat fat 5g, fibre 3g, sugar 3g, salt 1.1g



Farro salad with roasted carrots & feta

SERVES 4 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 25 MINS Easy V Low cal Iron Folate Fibre 2 of 5-a-day

500g carrots, halved or quartered (baby carrots can stay whole)
2 red onions, quartered
1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
200g farro or pearled spelt (farro is available at Bateel cafés)
100g baby spinach
50g feta (or vegetarian alternative)
FOR THE DRESSING
3 tbsp balsamic vinegar
2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
1 tbsp clear honey
2 garlic cloves, chopped
1 tsp each ground cumin and sweet smoked paprika
Small handful parsley, finely chopped

1 Heat oven to 190C/170C fan. Put the carrots and onions in a large roasting tin, drizzle with the oil and season well. Roast for 25 mins.
2 While the vegetables are roasting, boil the farro or spelt following pack instructions. Drain and tip into a bowl. Mix the dressing ingredients with 1 tbsp water and some seasoning, then stir half through the warm grains.
3 When the vegetables finish cooking, pour over the remaining dressing and mix well. Toss with the grains and spinach, then crumble over the feta.

PER SERVING 370 kcals, protein 12g, carbs 48g, fat 13g, sat fat 3g, fibre 9g, sugar 20g, salt 0.7g GF


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CPI

Kitchen notes

Nutrition advice, expert cooking tips and product picks for your pantry.



Dalia's tip of the month

I love using garlic in my cooking. Rather than using store-bought garlic paste, I make my own in a mortar and pestle. I always add salt to the garlic cloves, before crushing. The salt softens the garlic, making it easier to form a paste.

Soup for the soul



There's nothing like a hearty bowl of soup to warm up on winter evenings. Take the hassle out of making soups with the new Philips Cook and Blend soup maker, which is a one-stop solution for making nutritious soups in a jiffy. With five pre-defined programmes to choose from, you can also use it to make smoothies, compotes and frozen yoghurts – all in less than 20 minutes! It makes up to makes up to four portions and can keep the warm for 40 minutes, while the powerful motor also lets you use it as a regular blender. To get you started, it comes with a recipe booklet too. The easy-to-use appliance is available at leading electronic stores and hypermarkets for Dhs599.

SMART FOOD SWAPS





Swap for



or or



Health update>

The festive season is a time for indulgence, but don't let that take its toll on your waistline. A few healthy substitutes is all it takes to help keep the calories down, while enjoying the festivities. Cut down on extra sugars, fats and carbohydrates in your festive baked dishes, by swapping:

- **Bananas for butter**
- **Apple sauce for sugar**
- **Cocoa nibs for chocolate chips**
- **Fresh fruit purees and chopped fruit for fruit jams or jelly**
- **Greek yoghurt for heavy cream**
- **Canola oil for vegetable oil**
- **Soy nut butter for peanut butter (this is suitable for allergy sufferers as well).**

Deli alert!

Pssst... there's a new gourmet grocery opening up soon, and we can't wait! Maybury is due to open in January in Dubai Marina, and promises to be a friendly neighbourhood store with prices to match. Maybury will offer not only fresh meat and seafood, local, organic fruit and vegetables as well as cheese and freshly baked bread, but also a café which will serve up fresh breakfast, lunches and dinners. That's not all, the duplex outlet spread over 10,000 sq. feet, will also house a cooking studio where cooking classes, menu planning and tasting sessions are planned.

Look what we found!

3 great new products for your kitchen



We love flavoured oils! The A'Lolivier lavender and citrus infused olive oils, will give salads an aromatic and delicious twist, with just a drizzle. Dhs30 at Ripe market.



These glamorous Tuff dish wash gloves will ensure you don't ruin your manicure when doing the washing up. Dhs45 at Virgin Megastore.

Brew your own latte at home with the seasonal Starbucks Holiday blend. Its rich aroma and sweet and spicy cinnamon-infused flavours are perfect for the festive season! Dhs39.



Compiled by NICOLA MONTEATH

Stylish starters

Take the stress out of festive entertaining with these make-ahead recipes – just assemble and serve on the day.



Ham hock & mustard terrine, recipe p44

Whipped Brie salad with dates & candied walnuts

SERVES 8 ● PREP 15 MINS ● COOK 10 MINS Easy V

Make the walnuts two days ahead and the Brie can be whipped the night before.

600g Brie
85g stoned dates, cut into small pieces
120g bag rocket
100g shop-bought croutons, crumbled
FOR THE CANDIED WALNUTS
100g walnuts, halved
25g aster sugar
FOR THE DRESSING
6 tbsp walnut oil
2 tbsp balsamic vinegar

1 Heat oven to 190C/170C fan. To make the candied walnuts, shake the walnut halves in 2 tbsp water, then toss in the sugar. Scatter over a baking sheet and bake in the oven for 6-8 mins until golden brown. Remove from the oven and allow to cool.
2 Carefully peel the rind off the Brie and discard. Put the gooey inside in a medium-sized bowl. Using a spoon or small whisk, whip the Brie until pale and spoonable. To make the dressing, whisk the oil and vinegar together, then season.
3 In a large bowl, combine the walnuts, dates and rocket, then mix with some of the dressing. Place a spoonful of whipped Brie in the middle of each serving plate and arrange the salad around it. Scatter over the croutons, drizzle with a little extra dressing and serve.

PER SERVING 502 kcals, protein 19g, carbs 16g, fat 41g, sat fat 15g, fibre 1g, sugar 8g, salt 1.23g



Ham hock & mustard terrine

SERVES 8 ● PREP 30 MINS PLUS CHILLING ● COOK 3½ HRS

P A little effort

This can be made two to three days ahead.

2 small ham hocks, approx 1kg each, see tip left
sunflower oil, for greasing
2 tbsp wholegrain mustard
Small handful parsley, chopped
1 sheet gelatine
Caper berries and toasted bread, to serve
FOR THE STOCK
500ml cider
2 carrots, chopped
2 celery sticks, chopped
1 large onion, chopped
2 bay leaves, fresh or dried
6 thyme sprigs
3 star anise
6 whole peppercorns

1 Put the ham hocks in a large pan with the stock ingredients. Cover with cold water. Set pan over a high heat and bring to the boil. Reduce heat to a simmer, cook for 2½-3 hrs or until the meat falls from the bone. Leave to cool in the pan.
2 Grease a 1l terrine mould or loaf tin with the oil, then line with cling film. Remove the hocks, then strain the stock through a fine sieve into a pan. Set aside.
3 Shred the ham, leaving some large chunks, removing as much fat and sinew as possible. In a large bowl, mix the ham with the mustard and parsley. Press the mixture into the prepared terrine.
4 Bring the reserved stock back to a rapid boil and reduce by half. You should have about 600ml liquid remaining. Remove from the heat. Meanwhile, soak the gelatine in cold water for 5 mins to soften. Remove from the water, then squeeze out any excess liquid. Add the gelatine to the hot stock and stir well.
5 Pour enough of the stock over the ham to just cover. Tap terrine firmly on a hard surface to knock out air pockets, then cover with cling film. Chill for 3-4 hrs or overnight. To serve, remove from the mould and carve into chunky slices. Serve with caper berries and toast.

PER SERVING 219 kcals, protein 33g, carbs 2g, fat 8g, sat fat 2g, fibre none, sugar 2g, salt 3.26g



KNOWHOW

These are the same cut of meat as a pork knuckle or lamb shank (from the base of the leg), but the pork has been cured. The meat is full of flavour, but needs long, slow cooking. Smoked turkey is a good pork-free alternative.

Prawn cocktail crostini

SERVES 8 ● PREP 20 MINS ● COOK 5 MINS Easy

You can make the sauce the day before you're ready to assemble the crostini.

2 ripe avocados
1 tbsp lemon juice
300g cooked and peeled tiger prawns
2 tbsp olive oil
Large ciabatta, diagonally cut into 8 slices
8 nice Baby Gem leaves
Cayenne pepper and lemon wedges, to serve
FOR THE COCKTAIL SAUCE
6 tbsp mayonnaise
2 tbsp tomato ketchup
2 tsp brandy (optional)
Few drops Tabasco

1 To make the sauce, mix all ingredients in a bowl, season well and set to one side. If you're making this the day before, cover and place in the fridge until needed. Peel, then chop the avocados into small chunks, tossing in lemon juice as you go, so they don't discolour.
2 Mix the prawns with half the sauce, add the avocados and stir gently to coat everything. Heat a griddle pan. To make the crostini, rub a little olive oil onto each slice of ciabatta and grill on each side for 2 mins until toasted.
3 To serve, spread a little cocktail sauce on each crostini, top with a lettuce leaf and add a spoonful of the prawn cocktail mix. Sprinkle with a little cayenne pepper and serve with lemon wedges.

PER SERVING 315 kcals, protein 13g, carbs 21g, fat 20g, sat fat 4g, fibre 2g, sugar 3g, salt 1.46g GF



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5 ways with smoked salmon

Keep a few packs in the fridge to make these lovely seasonal dishes.

Recipes ADAM RUSSELL

Smoked salmon rösti cakes

MAKES 4 ● PREP 25 MINS ● COOK 25 MINS Easy Low fat

Cook **750g potatoes** in boiling salted water until just tender. Cool, grate, then toss with **1 finely sliced red onion**, **140g diced smoked salmon**, **a small bunch chopped tarragon**, **zest 1 lemon** and some seasoning. Shape into **4 rösti cakes**. Heat **2 tbsp olive oil** in a large frying pan. Fry the cakes for a few mins on each side until golden and crisp.

PER SERVING 250 kcals, protein 13g, carbs 35g, fat 8g, sat fat 1g, fibre 3g, sugar 3g, salt 1.71g

Avocado, smoked salmon & potato salad

SERVES 4 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 15 MINS Easy

Cook **500g baby new potatoes** in boiling salted water until tender. Drain, cool, then halve. Mix juice of **1 lime** and **4 heaped tbsp mayonnaise**, then gently mix with the **potatoes**, a small bunch sliced **spring onions**, **1 diced avocado** and **140g thickly sliced smoked salmon**. Finish with **black pepper.**

PER SERVING 423 kcals, protein 12g, carbs 22g, fat 32g, sat fat 6g, fibre 3g, sugar 3g, salt 2.17g

Salmon, fennel & lime plates

SERVES 4 ● PREP 15 MINS ● NO COOK Easy

Divide **140g smoked salmon** between 4 plates. Toss **1 finely sliced fennel**, **1 finely sliced red onion**, **juice 1 lime**, **2 tsp white wine vinegar**, **3 tbsp olive oil** and **a little black pepper**. Arrange over the salmon and serve.

PER SERVING 138 kcals, protein 10g, carbs 3g, fat 10g, sat fat 2g, fibre 1g, sugar 2g, salt 1.69g GF

Eggs Benedict blinis

MAKES 36 ● PREP 20 MINS ● COOK 5 MINS Easy

Warm a **123g pack blini pancakes** following pack instructions. Snip **175g smoked salmon** into small slices, **quarter 10 cooked quail's eggs** and snip a **small bunch chives**. Top each blini with some salmon, **a dollop of hollandaise**, a quarter of **egg** and a few **chives**.

PER SERVING 22 kcals, protein 2g, carbs 1g, fat 1g, sat fat none, fibre none, sugar none, salt 0.30g

Pasta with smoked salmon & mangetout

SERVES 4 ● PREP 5 MINS ● COOK 20 MINS Easy

Slice **175g smoked salmon** into strips. Boil **400g pasta** shapes following pack instructions, but add **200g mangetout** for the final 2 mins. Drain. Toss the drained pasta, mangetout and smoked salmon with **150ml single cream**, a good squeeze **lemon juice** and seasoning.

PER SERVING 517 kcals, protein 24g, carbs 79g, fat 14g, sat fat 6g, fibre 4g, sugar 5g, salt 0.11g GF



Salmon, fennel & lime plates

The big day

Make it your best-ever Christmas – here's all the recipes you need for your special meal, with lots of choices to suit everyone, and plenty of make-ahead options to ensure minimum stress on the day. Photographs DAVID MUNNS

Food styling LIZZY HARRIS Styling JENNY IGGLEDEN Wine notes SARAH JANE EVANS MW





The main event

Christmas turkey with clementine & bay butter

SERVES 8 ● PREP 25 MINS (NOT INCLUDING GRAVY) PLUS UP TO 2 DAYS SALTING ● COOK 3 HRS 25 MINS-3 HRS 50 MINS

A little effort ★Make ahead

5-5.5kg oven-ready turkey, neck and giblets removed and saved
1 onion, halved
FOR THE SALT MIX
5 bay leaves, crumbled if dry, torn if fresh
1 tbsp fresh thyme leaves, plus extra for scattering
1 tsp black peppercorns
85g/3oz coarse sea salt
Zest of1 orange, plus extra for scattering
FOR THE CLEMENTINE & BAY BUTTER
100g butter, softened
Zest and juice of 1 clementine
Splash of Sherry
Large thyme sprig, leaves picked
2 bay leaves
ON-THE-DAY GRAVY
4 tbsp flour
250ml dry Sherry

1 Up to two days before, salt the turkey. If you have a spice grinder or mini-chopper, tip in all the ingredients for the salt mix and grind to make a wet salt. If you are using a pestle and mortar, grind the herbs and pepper together, then add the salt and orange zest, and grind well again. Set aside. Carefully rinse the turkey and pat dry with kitchen paper. Sit the turkey in its roasting tin and use the salt mix to season the turkey generously all over. Put the turkey breast-side up in the tin, cover with cling film and leave in the fridge for up to 2 days. (This can be done a day ahead but the longer you leave it, the more the flavour of the salt rub will permeate the bird.)

2 To make the clementine & bay butter, mash all the ingredients together in a bowl with some seasoning and set aside. ★*Can be made 2 days ahead or frozen for up to a month.*

3 Remove the turkey from the fridge 1 hr before you want to cook it and rinse off all the salt really well. Pat it dry, rinse out the roasting tin, then sit the turkey back in the tin and leave at room temperature for about 1 hr, uncovered.

4 Heat oven to 180C/160C fan. Calculate a cooking time of 40 mins per kg for the first 4kg of the turkey, then 45 mins for every kg after that. Rub the turkey all over with most of the butter – no need to season. If you haven't used the neck for the Make-ahead gravy (right), then add the neck to the tin with the onion. Cover the tin loosely with foil and roast for the calculated cooking time. For the final 30 mins, remove the foil, baste the turkey, scatter with the reserved thyme and orange zest, and increase the oven temp to 200C/180C fan. (Now is the time to pop in the stuffings and roast potatoes, if you are doing them.) When the turkey is beautifully brown and cooked through, remove from the oven and leave to rest on a warm platter covered loosely with foil and a tea towel.

5 If you've made our Make-ahead gravy (right), you can add the roasting juices to that. To make your gravy fresh, pour off most of the fat but leave the juices in the tin and put it on a low heat. Stir in the flour to a paste. Pour in the Sherry and sizzle for 1 min, then gradually add 850ml water and simmer until you have a thick gravy – make sure to scrape up the sides of the tin to release any bits. Sieve the gravy into a saucepan and reheat to serve – the gravy probably won't need extra seasoning as the turkey juices will be salty enough.

PER SERVING 674 kcals, protein 93g, carbs 2g, fat 32g, sat fat 13g, fibre none, sugar 1g, salt 2.0g

Make-ahead gravy

SERVES 8 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 1 HR 10 MINS Easy

Leaving the onion skins on helps to add flavour and colour to this tasty gravy.

1kg chicken wings, halved with kitchen scissors
The turkey neck, if you have it, cut into pieces
3 large carrots, chopped into chunks
2 onions, unpeeled and chopped
3 celery sticks, chopped
Small handful thyme sprigs
2 tbsp sunflower oil
2 tsp golden caster sugar
1 tbsp tomato purée
4 tbsp plain flour
4 tbsp balsamic vinegar
1 vegetable stock cube

1 Heat oven to 220C/200C fan. Tip the chicken wings into a roomy roasting tin with the turkey neck (if using), carrots, onions, celery and thyme. Scatter over the sugar, toss in the oil and roast for 50 mins until brown and lightly charred.

2 Get the kettle on. Put the roasting tin on a low heat, stir in the tomato purée and flour, and cook until sticky. Splash in the balsamic vinegar, then pour over 1.5 litres water to just cover all the ingredients. Bring to a simmer. Crumble in the stock cube and use a potato masher to mash all the ingredients together to release the flavour.

3 Simmer everything for 20 mins until you have a tasty thickened gravy, then strain it through a sieve, pushing down hard on all the mushy veg. Cool and chill for up to 3 days, or freeze for up to 3 months.

4 Heat the gravy to serve, adding roasting juices from your turkey, if you like.

PER SERVING 166 kcals, protein 11g, carbs 15g, fat 6g, sat fat 1g, fibre 2g, sugar 7g, salt 0.5g





Chipolatas wrapped in sage & pancetta

Cherry & pistachio stuffing

Stuffing & sausages

Chipolatas wrapped in sage & pancetta

MAKES 24 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 20 MINS Easy ❄ P ★Make ahead

Give standard pigs-in-blankets an upgrade with this simple recipe.

24 slices pancetta
24 whole sage leaves
24 chipolata sausages

Heat oven to 220C/200C fan. Put 1 slice of pancetta on a chopping board and stretch out using the back of a knife. Put 1 sage leaf and 1 sausage on top, and roll the sausage up on the diagonal, covering all of it. Put on a lightly greased baking sheet and repeat with the remaining sausages. ★*Can be prepared and chilled 2 days ahead*. Cook for 20-25 mins until crisp and cooked through.

PER CHIPOLATA 103 kcals, protein 6g, carbs 2g, fat 8g, sat fat 3g, fibre none, sugar 1g, salt 0.6g

Cherry & pistachio stuffing

MAKES 24 BALLS ● PREP 15 MINS ● COOK 30 MINS Easy ❄ P

Small knob of butter
1 red onion, finely chopped
450g sausagemeat
175g fresh white breadcrumbs
Zest of 1 lemon
Zest of 1 orange
100g dried sour cherries
100g shelled pistachios, roughly chopped
1 large egg
Small bunch parsley, chopped
Drizzle olive oil

1 Melt the butter in a small pan, add the onion and cook until soft, about 8 mins. Leave to cool.
2 Mix the onion with the remaining ingredients, apart from the oil – the best way to do this is with your hands. Roll the stuffing mixture into 24 walnut-sized balls and put on a baking tray. ★ *Can be made and chilled for up to 2 days in advance, or frozen for up to 2 months.*
3 When the turkey comes out of the oven, turn the heat up to 220C/200C fan. Drizzle the stuffing with oil and cook on a middle shelf for 30 mins. Swap to the top shelf for the final 10 mins if they need browning.

PER BALL 128 kcals, protein 4g, carbs 11g, fat 7g, sat fat 2g, fibre 1g, sugar 4g, salt 0.6g

Also try

Chestnut stuffing roll

SERVES 8 P



Take the chestnut stuffing mixture of the **Parsnip, cranberry & chestnut loaf recipe** (p54). Tear off a very large sheet of foil, smear **2tbsp butter** in the middle, making a rectangle about 30 x 40cm. Lay **15 bacon rashers** over in a row, use a rolling pin to slowly but firmly roll down the length of the bacon strips to stretch them. Shape the stuffing into a log. Using the foil, roll up the stuffing so that it is completely wrapped in the bacon. Chill until ready to roast. To cook, bake at 200C/180C fan for 30 mins. Then, turn up the heat to 220C/200C fan, unwrap the stuffing and continue to cook for 30 mins more until crisp. Slice and serve with **sage leaves** fried in butter, if you like.



The little touches make all the difference

Great sauces

Caramelised cranberry relish

SERVES 8 ● PREP 5 MINS ● COOK 10 MINS

Easy V ❄

This relish will keep for a few weeks in the fridge, and also goes well with lots of other Christmas favourites, like ham or duck, or served with tangy cheese like cheddar.

1 large orange
Small piece ginger, finely shredded into matchsticks
100g golden caster sugar
500g fresh or frozen cranberries

1 Use a zester to zest the orange or use a peeler to peel off the zest, then finely shred it with a knife and set aside with the ginger. Halve and juice the orange.
2 Tip the orange juice and sugar into a shallow saucepan and boil gently until you get an amber-orange caramel. Scatter the zest and ginger into the caramel, cook for 1 min, then tip in the cranberries. Cook everything on a high heat for 5 mins until the cranberries are starting to split but still have texture. Leave to cool and serve with the turkey.

PER SERVING 83 kcals, protein none, carbs 18g, fat none, sat fat none, fibre 3g, sugar 16g, salt none

Luxury bread & onion sauce

SERVES 8 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 35 MINS

Easy V ❄ ★Make ahead

25g butter
1 large onion, very finely chopped
1 tsp thyme leaves
1 bay leaf
600ml whole milk
1 star anise
Pinch ground cloves
100g good-quality white bread, crusts removed, chopped into chunks
2 heaped tbsp crème fraîche

1 Heat the butter in medium pan until just starting to sizzle. Cook the onion over a very low heat with the thyme and bay for 15-20 mins until soft and just lightly golden. Pour the milk into the pan, add the star anise and ground cloves, season and bring to the boil. Turn off the heat and leave to infuse for at least 10 mins.
2 Remove the star anise and bay, and add the bread chunks to the pan. Bring back to the boil, then remove from the heat and blitz using a hand blender. Return to the heat, stir in the crème fraîche and simmer gently for 2 mins until thickened. ★*Can be made ahead and reheated with a splash more milk.*
Tip into a bowl, sprinkle with cracked pepper, and add the bay leaf, if you like.

PER SERVING 136 kcals, protein 4g, carbs 11g, fat 8g, sat fat 5g, fibre 1g, sugar 5g, salt 0.3g



Perfect potatoes

Crispy golden spuds

SERVES 8 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 1 HR 40 MINS Easy V ❄ Good for you ★Make ahead

1.5kg potatoes, such as Maris Piper or King Edward, cut into large roastie size
2 tbsp vegetable bouillon powder or 2 vegetable stock cubes
1 tsp turmeric
3 bay leaves
6 tbsp vegetable, sunflower or rapeseed oil
2 tbsp duck or goose fat (optional)
1 tbsp plain flour

1 Put the potatoes in a large pan, cover with cold water and add the bouillon powder or stock cubes, turmeric and bay leaves. Cover with a lid, bring to a boil and simmer for 10 mins until the potatoes start to soften on the outside but remain whole.
2 Drain the potatoes well and give them a shake in the colander to rough up the edges, then leave to steam-dry in the colander for 5 mins. Meanwhile, pour the oil and duck or goose fat, if using, into your largest baking tray (the spuds will need plenty of space to really crisp up) and put in the oven underneath the turkey to heat for a few mins. Once the potatoes are dry, sprinkle with the flour and plenty of seasoning, then toss to coat.
★*Can be frozen for up to 3 months – to cook from frozen, add an extra 20 mins to the cooking time.*
3 Remove the hot tray from the oven. Carefully tip in the potatoes and coat in the hot fat. Cook for 30 mins at 200C/180C fan, on the lower shelf of the oven underneath the turkey. When you take the turkey out, turn the oven up to 220C/200C fan. Turn the potatoes over in the tray and continue cooking for 45 mins-1 hr longer on the top shelf, until golden and crispy.

PER SERVING 264 kcals, protein 4g, carbs 33g, fat 13g, sat fat 2g, fibre 3g, sugar 1g, salt 0.1g

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زيت زيتون اسبانيا



For the vegetarians

Vegetarian red wine gravy

SERVES 4 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 20 MINS Easy V

2 tbsp oil
2 large onions, cut into wedges
2 carrots, roughly chopped
2 celery sticks, roughly chopped
2 bay leaves, torn
2 tbsp flour
400ml red wine
400ml vegetable stock
2 tbsp mushroom ketchup

1 Heat the oil in a saucepan. When hot, add the onions, carrots, celery and bay, and cook gently for 10-15 mins until soft. Remove the bay leaves.
2 Add the flour and cook for 3-4 mins until brown. Add the wine little by little, stirring constantly, then add the stock. Once fully incorporated, simmer for 5-10 mins until the gravy has thickened. Strain through a sieve, stir through the mushroom ketchup and season to taste.

PER SERVING 208 kcals, protein 3g, carbs 19g, fat 6g, sat fat 1g, fibre 3g, sugar 10g, salt 0.6g



Parsnip, cranberry & chestnut loaf

SERVES 4-6 ● PREP 30 MINS ● COOK 1½ HRS Easy V Folate Fibre 2of 5-a-day ★Make ahead

The mace is an essential flavouring in this recipe, so don't miss it out. It adds a savouriness that balances the sweetness from the chestnuts and parsnips.

500g fresh or frozen cranberries
175g caster sugar
1 tbsp butter, plus extra for greasing
550g parsnips – choose long, thin ones if you can – peeled then halved lengthways
1 tbsp honey
FOR THE CHESTNUT STUFFING
1 tbsp butter
3 onions, chopped
15g pack sage, shredded
200g pack cooked chestnuts
100g hazelnuts
100g breadcrumbs
½ tsp mace
2 large eggs, beaten

1 To make the stuffing, melt the butter in a large non-stick pan, add the onions and gently cook for 10-15 mins until very soft. Stir in the sage for 1 min, then tip into a large mixing bowl. Pulse the chestnuts in a food processor until chopped into small bits, then tip these into the bowl with the onions and repeat with the hazelnuts. Add the breadcrumbs, mace, beaten egg, 1 tsp salt and some pepper, and mix everything together well.
2 Tip the cranberries and sugar into a pan and simmer for about 8-10 mins over a high heat. The sugar will melt and the cranberries will pop and become saucy – keep bubbling until sticky. Set aside to cool. Grease a 900g loaf tin, line with a long strip of baking parchment that covers the bottom and the two ends, then grease this as well.
3 Bring a large pan of salted water to the boil. Throw in the parsnips and boil for 3½ mins. Drain well. From the thinner ends, cut off lengths of parsnip that fit widthways across the bottom of your loaf tin. Keep going until you have enough to snugly line the base of the tin (but don't line it yet). Roughly chop all leftover parsnip and mix into the nut mixture.
4 Heat oven to 180C/160C fan. Mix the parsnip lengths with 1 tbsp butter and the honey to coat, then fit them into the tin. Top with one-third of the nut mixture – pack it down well and smooth the surface. Spread half of the cranberry sauce on top. Top with the remaining nut mixture and pack down as before. ★*Can be made up to 24 hrs ahead, then covered and chilled*. Cover with foil and bake for 1 hr.
5 Splash water into the remaining cooked cranberries until saucy. Loosen around the sides of the loaf with a round-bladed knife if you need to, then turn out. Serve in slices with extra cranberry sauce and our vegetarian gravy.

PER SERVING (6) 535 kcals, protein 10g, carbs 78g, fat 19g, sat fat 4g, fibre 11g, sugar 47g, salt 0.5g



Everyone will want a slice

Seasonal sides



Roasted sprouts with chestnuts & bacon

SERVES 8 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 35 MINS

Easy | P | Low cal | Folate | Fibre | Vit C | Good for you | 1 of 5-a-day

1.5kg Brussels sprouts, trimmed
200g vacuum-packed chestnuts, roughly chopped in half
200g smoked bacon lardons
1 tsp vegetable oil

1 Heat oven to 220C/200C fan. Bring a large pan of water to the boil, add the sprouts and cook for 5 mins. Drain and refresh in cold water.
2 Toss the sprouts with all the other ingredients in a bowl and season with a pinch of salt and a good grinding of black pepper. Tip onto a large baking tray in a single layer. Put in the oven and roast for 30 mins, tossing halfway through, until the bacon is crispy and the sprouts are golden and tender.

PER SERVING 188 kcals, protein 12g, carbs 16g, fat 8g, sat fat 3g, fibre 9g, sugar 7g, salt 0.7g



Carrots with pine nuts, raisins & parsley

SERVES 8 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 10 MINS

Easy | V | Low fat | Good for you | 1 of 5-a-day | ★Make ahead

800g carrots, halved and cut on the diagonal into 1cm pieces
Large knob of butter
50g pine nuts
50g sultanas
Large pinch of sugar
Small handful parsley, chopped

1 Put the carrots in a large pan and cover with water. Bring to the boil and cook for 6-8 mins until just tender, then drain. ★*Can be done the day before; just chill the carrots until needed.*
2 Melt the butter in the same pan, add the pine nuts and sultanas, and cook for 2 mins until the pine nuts start to lightly brown. Return the carrots to the pan with the sugar, parsley and plenty of seasoning. Toss everything to coat.

PER SERVING 101 kcals, protein 2g, carbs 12g, fat 5g, sat fat 1g, fibre 4g, sugar 12g, salt 0.1g



Carbonara cabbage

SERVES 8 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 15 MINS

Easy | P | Folate | Vit C | 1 of 5-a-day

1kg Savoy cabbage, finely shredded
12 rashers streaky bacon, chopped into small pieces
2 garlic cloves, finely sliced
250ml single cream
50g Parmesan, grated

1 Bring a large pan of water to the boil. Tip in the cabbage and boil for 10 mins. Drain and keep warm.
2 Meanwhile, heat a large frying pan and cook the bacon for 7-8 mins until golden and crisp, adding the garlic for the final 3 mins.
3 In a bowl, mix together the cream and Parmesan with some freshly ground black pepper. Add the cream mixture and the cabbage to the bacon pan. Toss everything together until well coated. Return to the heat to warm through for a few mins before serving.

PER SERVING 204 kcals, protein 11g, carbs 5g, fat 16g, sat fat 8g, fibre 4g, sugar 5g, salt 1.1g

Christmas pudding with a modern twist

Sticky date & raisin pudding

SERVES 8 ● PREP 15 MINS ● COOK 3 HRS 45 MINS A little effort 1 of 5-a-day ★Make ahead

250g stoned dates, roughly chopped
100g raisins
150ml milk
150ml brandy or rum
140g butter, softened, plus extra for greasing
50g soft brown sugar
2 large eggs
175g self-raising flour
1 tsp mixed spice
Zest of 1 orange

1 Put the dates, raisins, milk and brandy or rum in a small saucepan and bring to the boil. Simmer for 5 mins until the fruit is soft and the liquid has been absorbed – don't worry if it looks a little curdled. Leave to cool. Meanwhile, generously butter a 1.2-litre pudding basin.

2 To prepare your steamer, place a snugly fitting upturned bowl or saucer in the base of a large, deep saucepan, big enough to hold your pudding basin. Cut out a large circle of baking parchment and one of foil, both 5cm wider than the rim of your pudding basin. Make a sharp pleat down the centre of both, then butter one side of the parchment – this will be your lid. Set aside. Boil the kettle for the steamer.

3 In a mixing bowl, beat the butter and sugar with an electric whisk until pale and fluffy. Add the eggs, beating again until well combined. Finally, add the flour, mixed spice, orange zest, date mixture and a pinch of salt, and stir everything well with a spatula until there are no visible lumps of flour. Tip the cake mixture into your pudding basin. Cover the bowl with the parchment, butter-side down and pleat on top, then the foil. Push the sides of the lid down, then tie a piece of string securely under the lip of the basin. Use any overhanging string to create a handle to help you lift the pudding.

4 Stand the pudding basin on top of the upturned bowl or saucer in the saucepan and fill the pan with enough boiling water to come halfway up the side of the basin. Bring to a gentle simmer, then cover the pan with a lid and leave to steam for 2½ hrs, topping up with boiling water if the level gets low. Check the pudding is cooked by inserting a skewer into the centre. If the skewer has any uncooked mixture on it, return it to the pan to steam for another 15 mins, then check again. ★*Once cooked, you can cover the pudding with clean baking parchment and foil and keep for up to a week*. Re-steam the pudding for 1 hr before serving.

PER SERVING 418 kcals, protein 6g, carbs 50g, fat 17g, sat fat 10g, fibre 3g, sugar 36g, salt 0.6g

Salted caramel sauce

SERVES 8 ● PREP 2 MINS PLUS COOLING ● COOK 5 MINS Easy ★Make ahead

175g light soft brown sugar
300ml double cream
50g butter
½ tsp salt

Combine all the ingredients in a saucepan set over a low heat, and stir until the sugar has dissolved. Turn the heat up and bubble the sauce for 2-3 mins until golden and syrupy. Leave to cool for 10 mins before serving. ★*Can be made up to 3 days in advance and chilled – gently reheat to serve.*

PER SERVING 316 kcals, protein 1g, carbs 23g, fat 25g, sat fat 16g, fibre none, sugar 23g, salt 0.4g GF

TIP To save hob space on Christmas Day, why not plug in your slow cooker to reheat your pudding? Half-fill with boiling water and leave the pudding steaming for up to three hours.



A Christmas brai

Why not make use of the winter sunshine and the great outdoors to have a South African style Christmas dinner (think fresh salads, barbecues and traditional puddings) this year? Chef Alan Van Heerden shows us how.

Photographs CRIS MEJORADA



Chef Alan Van Heerden, the new chef de cuisine of Bateaux Dubai, is no stranger to celebrating Christmas in the sunshine. Hailing from Cape Town, South Africa, Alan says, "Christmas in South Africa is all about barbecues on the beach, socialising with family and friends and just enjoying the holiday, beach weather and everything the season has to." Here he shows us how to recreate some typical South African festive dishes.

Watermelon salad with feta, rocket, olives and a balsamic reduction

SERVES 4

500g fresh watermelon, sliced, cubed and skin removed
100g fresh feta
50g fresh rocket leaves, washed
50g kalamata olives, pitted
10ml balsamic reduction
10ml light fruity olive oil (Available at Jones the Grocer)
2g fresh crushed black pepper

1 Place the cubed watermelon on a plate, and crumble the feta over it. Add the fresh rocket and sprinkle the olives on top.
2 Drizzle the balsamic reduction and olive oil over. Season with pepper and serve.



Grilled lamb chops with beetroot, sweet apple and goats cheese salad

SERVES 4

2kg lamb chops
FOR THE MARINADE
50ml olive oil
1 garlic clove, peeled and minced
30g fresh thyme (20g for the meat and 10g for the beetroot)
FOR THE SALAD
500g fresh beetroot
2 medium sized bay leaves
20pcs of whole peppercorn
2 medium sized sweet apple (Pink Ladies), peeled and grated
100g goats cheese, cubed

1 To make the lamb marinade, mix the olive oil, minced garlic and thyme in a bowl. Pour the marinade onto the lamb cutlets and allow to marinate in the fridge for about 2 hrs.
2 While the lamb is marinating, bring a pot of water to the boil, add thyme, peppercorns and bay leaf. Gently cook the beetroot in the water for about 20 mins or until soft. Once the beetroot is softened, remove skin and dice into medium size pieces. Set aside to cool.
3 Peel the apples and grate it overthe diced beetroot. Add goats cheese on top.
4 Heat up the barbecue for 5-10 mins. Grill the lamb cutlets for 3 mins on each side. Put in a preheated oven at 140C for 5 mins. Serve with the beetroot salad, and greens on the side.

CHEF'S TIP To give the dish a chef's touch, slice the goat's cheese and sprinkle brown sugar on top. Using a confectionary blow torch, caramelise the sugar and then add to the beetroot salad.

Serve with



Fruit chutney with grilled apricots

SERVES 4
Heat a griddle pan, and place **30g fresh apricot**, washed, sliced and pitted, on the hot pan. Grill for 2 mins, then turn it quarter clockwise to give it a diamond effect with the griddle marks, for presentation. Remove from the grill and set aside to cool. Toast **10g pine nuts** in a pan until golden brown. Set aside. In a bowl, place a few spoonfuls of **80ml Mrs Ball's chutney** (Available at Spinneys), add the sliced apricots and sprinkle pine nuts on top.

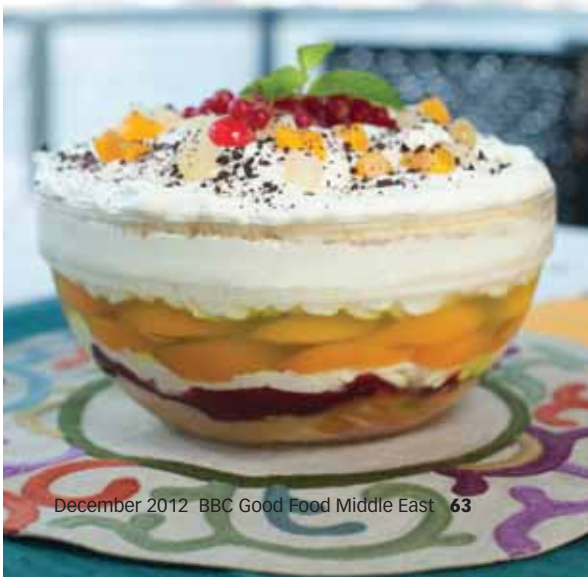
TIP: You could also cut the apricot in half, and grill it, pouring the chutney in the pitted section of the apricot, and topping with a sprinkle of the toasted pine nuts.

Mum's homemade trifle

SERVES 4

1 packet of lime or strawberry jello
200g of vanilla sponge cake
60ml sweet sherry or brandy (optional)
60g peach halves in syrup
400ml fresh milk
3 large eggs
1 egg yolks
60g white sugar
1 fresh vanilla pod
100ml fresh whipping cream
30g cranberries
10g almonds
50g dark chocolate, grated for garnishing

1 Prepare the jello according to package instructions.
2 Cut the sponge cake into round shapes and line the bottom of a large bowl.
3 Add sherry or brandy for the sponge to absorb the liquor. Drain the syrup from the peaches and slice. Place on top of the sponge.
4 To make the custard, place milk in a bowl and add the sugar, eggs and egg yolk to it. Cut the vanilla pod in half and scrape the seeds into the custard mixture.
5 Whisk the custard mixture over a double boiler till the custard thickens and the eggs are cooked (make sure it isn't too hot or else it will curdle).
6 Place a layer of jello on top of the fruit and add the custard on top. Repeat this process until the bowl is filled to the brim.
7 Add fresh whipping cream on top of the triffle and the cranberries. Sprinkle grated chocolate and almonds before serving. GF



Let it snow

Spend a few fun hours baking this light Christmas cake, then choose your favourite way to decorate – there are three gorgeous ideas to suit any skill level. Recipes SARAH COOK Photographs STUART OVENDEN

Try our **cover recipe!**

One recipe 3 ways to decorate

1 Snowman friends

Food styling SARAH COOK | Styling TONY HUTCHINSON



Apricot & almond fruitcake

SERVES 12 ● PREP 30 MINS ● COOK 1 HR 25 MINS Easy ❄ UN-ICED

Lighter than a traditional fruitcake, this needs no maturing, so you don't need to make it in advance.

140g golden sultanas
4 tbsp Sherry
250g pack butter, softened, plus extra for greasing
250g light soft brown sugar
1 tsp vanilla extract
3 large eggs, beaten
200g plain flour
1 tsp baking powder
100g ground almonds
50g toasted flaked almonds
140g dried apricots, chopped
140g mixed peel
Zest and juice 1 lemon
Zest and juice 1 orange

1 Mix the sultanas and Sherry and set aside for 1 hr to soak.
2 Heat oven to 160C/140C fan. Grease a deep, 23cm loose-bottomed cake tin, and line the base and sides with a double layer of baking parchment that comes about 2.5cm above the sides of the tin. In your largest mixing bowl, beat the butter, sugar and vanilla together until pale and fluffy. Beat in the eggs one by one.
3 Stir in the flour, baking powder, and the ground and flaked almonds. Next, add the soaked sultanas with any remaining Sherry, the dried apricots, the mixed peel, and all the zest and juice. Scrape into the cake tin, smoothing out the surface.
4 Bake on the middle shelf of the oven for 1 hr 25 mins. Poke with a skewer in the centre to check it is cooked – if the skewer comes out with any uncooked mixture stuck to it, bake for 10 mins more before checking again. Cool in the tin.

Decorated, or wrapped in greaseproof paper and foil, the cake will keep for up to a month.

PER SERVING 486 kcals, protein 7g, carbs 56g, fat 27g, sat fat 12g, fibre 3g, sugar 43g, salt 0.53g

Now choose your decoration

Snowman friends

PREP 2 HRS ● NO COOK More of a challenge

ICE THE CAKE

Melt **85g apricot jam**, then sieve and brush a little all over the fruitcake (or any 23cm cake). On a clean surface lightly dusted with a little **sifted icing sugar**, roll out **750g marzipan** to a circle large enough to cover the cake – use a piece of kitchen string to help you check. Lift up the marzipan by hanging it over your rolling pin, then drape over the cake. Gently pat and smooth the marzipan down the sides of the cake, then trim any excess from the bottom.

Colour **1kg ready-to-roll regal icing from 2 x 1kg packs with a little blue food colouring**, then cover the marzipan using the same method as you covered the cake, firstly brushing the marzipan with more apricot jam. Trim the base.

ADD SOME SNOW

Use your hands to roll two-thirds of the remaining regal icing into a long, thin sausage on an icing sugar-dusted surface. It should be long enough to go round the cake – use a piece of kitchen string to help you measure it. Use a rolling pin to roll the sausage into a strip about 5cm wide. Use a small, sharp knife to straighten one edge, and trim the other into a wiggly edge.

Keep all the trimmings, and squash half into 2 wobbly circles for the snowmen to sit on. Brush the strip, circles and the very bottom edge of the cake with a little runny icing made with 100g sifted icing sugar and a splash of water. Scatter 85g desiccated coconut over the strip and circles, gently pressing to stick and cover. Starting with one end of the strip, stick it round the base of the cake. This can be a bit fiddly, so if you're nervous, simply halve the icing from the start and do in 2 half-length strips, using a little more coconut to hide the joins on the cake.

SHAPE THE SNOWMEN

Roll the remaining third of regal icing into 2 large balls, 2 medium balls and 2 small balls. Stick together, squashing slightly, into 2 snowmen. Brush 4 cocktail sticks with a little **brown food colouring** and stick into the snowmen for arms.

ADD BUTTONS AND NOSES

Push a few **whole cloves** into one snowman as buttons. Use a little **orange food colouring** to dye a little of the strip trimmings, and shape a little around the pointy end of 2 cloves to look like carrot noses. Use another clove to make little holes where the noses will go, dab a bit of runny icing into the holes and stick on the noses, pushing them into the holes to help hold them.

SMILEY FACES

Use a black or brown writing icing pen to dot on smiley mouths and eyes – it helps to mark tiny holes with the end of a cocktail stick first. It stops you making mistakes and helps the icing stay in place.

MAKE THE HAT

Dye another lump of regal icing trimmings with **food colouring** (we used green). Shape most into a woolly hat shape, pressing a slight dip into the bottom with your thumb where it will sit on the snowman's head. Roll a little ball to stick on top of the hat; attach it with more runny icing. Then roll and cut a thin strip to stick round the base of the hat. Use a cocktail stick to make markings like a woolly hat and rough up the ball on top. A little more runny icing will help it stick onto your snowman's head.



AND LASTLY, THE SCARF

Knot **3 strawberry laces** together at one end. Tightly plait a 10cm length and knot at the end again. Using scissors, snip the ends, leaving about 1cm for tassels after the knot, then wrap around the neck of the other snowman. Sit the wobbly snowy islands on top of the cake and a snowman on each one.

PER SERVING 1,371 kcals, protein 11g, carbs 247g, fat 44g, sat fat 19g, fibre 7g, sugar 232g, salt 0.96g

Don't forget! It's a good idea to remove the cocktail stick 'arms' before cutting and serving your cake – just to be on the safe side.

2 Crunchy nut

PREP 5 MINS ● COOK 1 HR 35 MINS

Easy

Bake the cake as before (or any other 20-23cm fruitcake), but bring out of the oven 10 mins before the end of the cooking time. Increase oven temperature to 200C/180C fan. Gently heat **100g golden syrup** and **50g butter** in a saucepan. When it is all melted and runny, stir in **150g toasted flaked almonds**, **150g whole blanched almonds** and **50g plain flour**. Use a couple of teaspoons to dot the mixture all over the top of the cake, and pop back in the oven for 12-15 mins until the topping is nicely golden. Cool, then remove from the tin and cover the sides with pretty ribbons. Lightly dust the cake with **icing sugar** to finish.

PER SERVING 710 kcals, protein 13g, carbs 68g, fat 44g, sat fat 16g, fibre 5g, sugar 51g, salt 0.65g



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3 Ho, Ho, Ho, Merry Christmas cake

PREP 1 HR ● NO COOK A little effort

Melt **85g apricot jam**, then sieve and brush a little all over the fruitcake (or any 23cm cake). On a clean surface lightly dusted with a little **sifted icing sugar**, roll out **750g marzipan** into a circle large enough to cover the cake – use a piece of kitchen string to help you check. Lift up the marzipan by hanging it over your rolling pin, then drape over the cake. Gently pat and smooth the marzipan down the sides of the cake, then trim any excess from the bottom.

Repeat everything again with **900g ready-to-roll regal icing** from a 1kg pack, firstly brushing the marzipan with more apricot jam. Trim the base as neatly as you can, then hide any rough bits by tying a pretty ribbon round the base. Dye the remaining **100g regal icing with a little red food colouring**, then thinly roll out and stamp or cut out a few 'H' shapes. Dribble a little water into 50g sifted icing sugar to make a paste. Dot a little on the backs of the 'H' shapes and some round sweets, and stick around the top of the cake to make evenly spaced Ho, Ho, Hos.

PER SERVING 1,052 kcals, protein 11g, carbs 178g, fat 37g, sat fat 14g, fibre 5g, sugar 164g, salt 0.79g GF



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Showstoppers!

Save the best for last with these impressive dinner party desserts. Photographs PETER CASSIDY



Cranberry & orange meringue pie

Food styling ANNIE RIGG | Styling TONY HUTCHINSON



Cranberry & orange meringue pie

SERVES 6-8 ● PREP 40 MINS PLUS CHILLING AND STANDING ● COOK 1 HR A little effort

The zesty filling contrasts wonderfully with the sweet, pillowy meringue. This is sure to become a new festive favourite!

FOR THE PASTRY
140g cold butter, diced
250g plain flour, plus extra for dusting
100g icing sugar
2 egg yolks
FOR THE FILLING
250g fresh or frozen cranberries
3 tbsp cornflour
Juice of 1 lemon
Juice of 2 oranges
100g golden caster sugar
85g butter, diced
3 egg yolks and 1 whole egg
FOR THE MERINGUE
4 egg whites
200g golden caster sugar
2 tsp cornflour

1 For the pastry, put the butter and flour in a food processor and whizz to fine crumbs, then pulse in the sugar. Mix the egg yolks with 2 tsp cold water and, with the blade running, pour in the liquid to bring the pastry together. If it doesn't come together, add 1-2 tsp more water until it does.
2 Tip the pastry onto a lightly floured surface and bring together to make a flat disc, then roll out to line a 23cm loose-bottomed tart tin. Leave the pastry overhanging the tin and prick the bottom of the pastry case with a fork. Chill for 30 mins.
3 Heat oven to 200C/180C fan. Line the pastry case with some crumpled baking parchment, fill with baking beans, then blind-bake for 15 mins. Carefully remove the parchment and beans, and bake for a further 10 mins or until the pastry looks golden and biscuity. Remove the case from the oven and trim the edges of the pastry with a sharp knife. Lower oven to 180C/160C fan.
4 To make the filling, cook the cranberries in a shallow pan over a medium heat with 2 tbsp water for 15 mins until pulpy. Push the fruit through a sieve over a bowl; discard the seeds and skins.
5 Put the cornflour in a clean pan and whisk in the lemon and orange juice until smooth. Add the sugar and cranberry purée, and heat until the mixture has bubbled and thickened, stirring constantly. Remove from the heat, add the butter and beat until melted. Add the egg yolks and whole egg to the pan, beat well and return to a medium heat. Keep stirring vigorously for 5 mins until the mixture thickens and drops off the spoon. Remove from the heat and set aside.
6 Meanwhile, make the meringue. Put the egg whites in a large clean bowl and whisk to stiff peaks. Add half the sugar, a spoonful at a time, whisking between each addition until stiff again. Whisk in the cornflour and remaining sugar until shiny and thick.
7 Pour the filling into the pastry case. Put spoonfuls of meringue around the edge of the filling so it just touches the pastry and pile the rest into the centre, spreading so that it covers the filling. Bake for 18-20 mins until the meringue is crisp and slightly coloured. Let the pie sit in the tin for 30 mins, then remove and leave for at least another 30 mins before slicing. *Can be made several hours ahead.*

PER SERVING (8) 621 kcals, protein 8g, carbs 84g, fat 28g, sat fat 16g, fibre 3g, sugar 54g, salt 0.6g

Pistachio & raspberry pithiviers

MAKES 4 ● PREP 1 HR PLUS CHILLING ● COOK 20-25 MINS ● BEFORE BAKING Easy

140g shelled unsalted pistachios
100g caster sugar
100g butter, diced
2 medium eggs
3 tbsp plain flour, plus extra for dusting
500g pack puff pastry
24 raspberries, defrosted if frozen
edible red glitter and gold spray, to decorate (optional)

1 Whizz together the pistachios, sugar, butter, 1 egg and the flour in a food processor to an almost smooth frangipane.
2 Roll the pastry into a ball (to break up some of the layers), then roll out very thinly on a flour-dusted surface. Cut out 4 x 11cm circles and 4 x 13cm circles – you'll probably need to re-roll once. Save all the trimmings.
3 Put 6 raspberries in the centre of each of the 4 smaller circles, then dollop on some pistachio frangipane. Using a small palette or round-bladed knife, spread and smooth the mixture into a dome, covering and enclosing the raspberries – leave a good 1cm of pastry clear around the edge. Beat the second egg and brush a little around the pastry edges. Carefully lay the larger circles of pastry on top, easing and pressing them over the filling bit by bit, all the way around, to squeeze out any air. Reshape the pithiviers to give a nice round dome shape, press the edges to seal, then trim any excess pastry around the edges if you need to. Brush egg over all the pithiviers.
4 Decorate the tops by lightly scoring a pattern with the tip of a sharp knife. Pinch the edges to seal, then crimp to give a fluted edge. If you like, brush egg over some of the rolled-out trimmings, then brush with edible glitter. Cover loosely with cling film. Chill for at least 2 hrs, but more if you can. Can be made 1 day in advance.
5 Heat oven to 200C/180C fan. Bake the pithiviers for 20-25 mins until golden and crisp. Serve immediately.

PER SERVING 1,038 kcals, protein 19g, carbs 86g, fat 69g, sat fat 30g, fibre 4g, sugar 31g, salt 1.5g

GADGET PICK: The perfect kitchen gear for this dish

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Iced chestnut ripple cheesecake

SERVES 12 ● PREP 1 HR ● COOK 10 MINS

A little effort

Chestnuts add a festive flavour to this decadent cheesecake. It's totally make-ahead: keep in the freezer, then take out and add the drizzle about an hour before serving.

FOR THE BASE
10 dark chocolate digestive biscuits
50g butter, melted
FOR THE CHESTNUT PRALINE
Sunflower oil, for greasing
100g golden caster sugar
100g chestnut pieces, roughly chopped
FOR THE FILLING
435g can chestnut purée
200g icing sugar
3 tbsp dark rum
300ml pot double cream
140g golden caster sugar
½ tsp vanilla extract
300g tub soft cheese, beaten until smooth

1 For the base, blitz the biscuits in a food processor or bash in a bag to make crumbs. Stir in the butter, then press into the base of a 22cm springform cake tin. Chill.
2 For the praline, line a tray with baking parchment and lightly oil it. Tip the caster sugar into a frying pan and place over a high heat. Cook for 5 mins, without stirring, until dissolved and you have a dark amber caramel. Throw in the chestnut pieces, then quickly tip onto the baking parchment and leave to harden. Break or chop into small pieces and set aside.
3 For the filling, blitz the chestnut purée in a food processor with the icing sugar and 1 tbsp of the rum. Set 3 tbsp of the mix aside. In a large bowl, whisk the cream with the caster sugar and vanilla until it holds its shape, then whisk in the soft cheese. Beat in the pieces of praline, then gently fold through the chewstnut purée so that it ripples the cream. Spoon onto the biscuit base. Bang the cake tin gently on the work surface to level and smooth over the top. Cover with cling film and freeze for at least 12 hrs or up to 1 month.
4 For the drizzle, mix the remaining rum with the reserved chestnut purée and enough water to make it just runny. If serving the cake within 2 days, chill the drizzle; if keeping for longer, freeze and defrost when needed.
5 Put the cheesecake in the fridge to thaw a little 30 mins before serving. Using a sandwich bag with a corner tip cut off, pipe the drizzle over the top of the cake in a zig-zag pattern. Carefully remove from the tin and serve in small wedges .

PER SERVING 506 kcals, protein 4g, carbs 55g, fat 29g, sat fat 18g, fibre 2g, sugar 43g, salt 0.6g GF

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Build your own *gingerbread house*

Let the kids join in on this fun, festive activity, and keep the colourful creation as a centerpiece on your Christmas table. Photographs CRIS MEJORADA

coordinated by NICOLA MONTEATH

WHAT YOU NEED • 1 gingerbread house • Royal icing • Assortment of jelly candy and colourful fruit roll strips for decoration.

TO MAKE: The Gingerbread House

500g honey
300g sugar
100g eggs
75ml milk
50ml oil
15g baking soda
40g Dohler ginger bread spice (available at Carrefour)
FOR SUGAR SYRUP
500g sugar granulated
250ml water

1 Melt honey and sugar in a saucepan until the sugar is smooth and mixed well. Remove from heat and set aside.
2 Mix all dry ingredients in a bowl, and add the warm honey mixture, egg and milk. Mix well, but don't over mix.
3 Place the dough in a container and keep overnight (store at room temperature if using the next day, or refrigerate if it is to be used later in the week, keeps for up to 3 days).
4 Roll to 3mm thickness and cut the house parts according to these sizes: 2 roofs 21x15cm; 2 walls10x15cm; 1 house base 18x18cm; and 1 house front and back, according to diagram below.
5 Brush all parts (except door) with fresh milk before baking. Bake at 180C for 12 mins or until golden colour. In the meantime, boil the syrup ingredients until it becomes runny. Once everything is baked, brush all pieces of the house with thick sugar syrup, and set aside to cool before assembling.
6 Once cooled, using a cutter, make a hole on the front side of the house (to resemble a window) and cut out an arch on the bottom centre part for the door – make sure not to cut out comletely.

TO MAKE: The Royal icing

450g icing sugar
90g fresh egg whites
½ tsp lemon juice

Mix all the ingredients well in a bowl, until it becomes a smooth paste.

Step by step guide to building the house



1 With the house base laid on a flat surface, pipe icing on to the edges of the walls, and front and back of the house. to secure.



2 Slowly place the walls, house front and back, and place them on the base of the house. Press down gently to make sure they are steady.



3 Pipe icing on the roof edges and place down on top of the house. Press down gently to secure. Set aside for 30 mins.



4 Once set, check if it is secure by gently nudging the roof. Pipe icing in stripes across the roof, this will act as a glue for the candy.

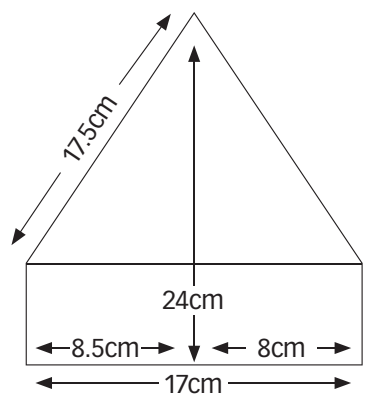


5 Decorate the roof by sticking the fruit roll strips, one by one, on the icing on the roof.



6 Decorate the rest of the house with candy – using icing as the glue, wherever you wish to stick the candy. Allow to fully dry at room temperature, in a cool dry place.

House front & back measurements





Arief Mochammed, pastry chef at Mazina, The Address Dubai Marina, got interested in the art of making pastries around 17 years ago, when he started his first job at a café in his hometown Jakarta, Indonesia. He has since gained experience with international chains such as Kempinski and Ritz Carlton, before joining the Address hotel group in Dubai.

Use up your leftovers!

7 quick ideas

Don't waste a thing this Christmas – here are lots of ways to turn leftovers from traditional Christmas recipes into brilliant new dishes. Recipes SARAH COOK
Photographs STUART OVENDEN



Red cabbage & potato hash (left)

SERVES 4-6 ● PREP 20 MINS ● COOK 25 MINS Easy V Folate Vit C

Boil **800g diced potatoes** until tender. Melt **25g butter** in a shallow pan (ovenproof if you have it), then fry **100-300g red cabbage salad** for a few mins to soften. Stir in the well-drained spuds (or **800g diced leftover roasties**) with some seasoning, press down and carry on cooking to crisp the bottom and heat through.

If you like, dot the top with a bit more butter and grill to crisp it up. Eat with fried eggs and slices of leftover ham.

PER SERVING 356 kcals, protein 14g, carbs 30g, fat 16g, sat fat 6g, fibre 4g, sugar 8g, salt 0.4g

Ham & clementine salad

SERVES 2 ● PREP 10 MINS ● NO COOK Easy P Vit C 1 of 5-a-day

Shred **200-300g ham**, then mix with **25g chopped pecans or walnuts**, **50g crumbled feta**, **2 big handfuls salad leaves** and ¼ **sliced red onion**.Mix together the juice of **1 clementine**, **1 tbsp red** or **white wine vinegar** and **1 tbsp olive oil**, and toss with the salad. Top with **2 sliced clementines** and serve straight away.

PER SERVING 442 kcals, protein 26g, carbs 17g, fat 30g, sat fat 9g, fibre 3g, sugar 16g, salt 3.4g

Easiest-ever cheese & onion tart

SERVES 4 ● PREP 20 MINS ● COOK 35 MINS Easy V Calcium

Gently fry **2 sliced onions in 25g butter** until really soft and golden. Take off the heat and stir in **100ml double cream**, **100g grated cheeses** (whatever mixture you like) and **1 beaten egg**.

Unroll a **320g sheet puff pastry** on a baking tray and score a border. Spoon the cheesy mixture inside the border and scatter with another **100g grated cheeses**. Season with black pepper.

Bake at 220C/200C fan for 20 mins until crisp and set. Eat warm or at room temperature with salad.

PER SERVING 779 kcals, protein 20g, carbs 33g, fat 63g, sat fat 36g, fibre 1g, sugar 5g, salt 1.8g

Sprout champ

SERVES 2 GENEROUSLY ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 20 MINS Easy V Low fat Vit C Good for you

Boil **300-400g roughly chopped potatoes** until tender. Meanwhile, shred a **good handful leftover cooked sprouts**, then stir-fry in a non-stick pan to heat through.

Drain the potatoes, then mash well with a **knob of butter**, **200ml milk** and some seasoning. Stir in the fried sprouts and eat with roast chicken or duck breasts, if you like.

PER SERVING 228 kcals, protein 9g, carbs 35g, fat 6g, sat fat 3g, fibre 5g, sugar 7g, salt 0.3g

Food styling KATY GREENWOOD | Styling SUE ROWLANDS



Quick plum crumble (top)

SERVES 6 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 30 MINS Easy 1 of 5-a-day

Quarter and stone **1kg plums** (or apples), then simmer, covered, with 200ml water and **3 tbsp sugar** until softened. Tip into a baking dish and scatter over the **200g Madeira cake**, diced into cubes.

Drizzle with **5 tbsp double cream** or **custard**, scatter with a **handful flaked almonds** or **chopped pistachios** and dust with a little **icing sugar**. Bake at 180C/160C fan, just until browning.

PER SERVING 327 kcals, protein 4g, carbs 46g, fat 14g, sat fat 7g, fibre 4g, sugar 40g, salt 0.4g

Spiced Christmas cake ice cream

SERVES 4-6 ● PREP 5 MINS, PLUS FREEZING ● NO COOK

Easy

Spoon a **500ml tub vanilla ice cream** into a food processor with **200g crumbled fruitcake (without icing),** and **½ tsp mixed spice**. Whizz together until nearly smooth, then spoon into a freezer container and freeze until solid.

PER 60g SCOOP 134 kcals, protein 2g, carbs 17g, fat 6g, sat fat 3g, fibre none, sugar 15g, salt 0.1g

Choc & ginger dippers (below)

SERVES AS MANY AS YOU LIKE ● PREP 2 MINS ● COOK 5 MINS

Easy

Melt some **dark** or **milk chocolate** and half dunk the baked trimmings from cutting out the sides of your gingerbread house. Leave to set, then serve with **tea**, **coffee** or **hot chocolate** after dinner. GF



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- **Table 9 by Nick and Scott** - *Hilton Dubai Creek*
- **Rivington Grill** - *Souk al Bahar*
- **The Ivy** - *Jumeirah Emirates Towers, Dubai*
- **Rhodes Twenty10** - *Le Royal Meridien Dubai Beach Resort & Spa*

BEST LATIN AMERICAN
- **Pachanga** - *Hilton Dubai Jumeirah*
- **Asado** - *The Palace The Old Town*
- **La Parilla** - *Jumeirah Beach Hotel*
- **Gaucho** - *DIFC*

BEST INDIAN
- **Chor Bazaar** - *Movenpick Hotel Ibn Batutta Gate*
- **Amala** - *Jumeirah Zabeel Saray*
- **Options By Sanjeev Kapoor** - *Convention Tower DWTC*
- **Asha's** - *Wafi*

BEST MIDDLE EASTERN
- **Al Hadheerah** - *Bab Al Shams Desert Resort & Spa*
- **Ewaan** - *The Palace Downtown*
- **Al Nafoorah** - *Jumeirah Zabeel Saray*
- **Marrakech** - *Shangri-La Hotel Dubai*

BEST STEAKHOUSE
- **Ruth's Chris Steak House** - *The H Hotel*
- **JW's Steakhouse** - *JW Marriott Dubai*
- **55th & 5th** - *St Regis Saadiyat Island Resort*
- **MJ's** - *Al Qasr Hotel, Madinat Jumeirah*

BEST BRUNCH
- **Jazz & Bubbles Friday Brunch at Talk** - *Movenpick Hotel Jumeirah Beach, Dubai*
- **Traiteur** - *Park Hyatt Dubai*
- **Al Qasr brunch** - *Al Qasr, Madinat Jumeirah Dubai*
- **Bubbalicious** - *Westin Mina Seyahi Beach Resort & Marina*

BEST ITALIAN
- **Bice** - *Hilton Dubai Jumeirah*
- **Ronda Locatelli** - *Atlantis, The Palm*
- **Certo** - *Radisson Blu Dubai Media City*
- **Medzo** - *Wafi*

RESTAURANTS - CASUAL DINING

BEST INTERNATIONAL
- **Jamie's Italian** - *Dubai Festival City*
- **Butcher Shop and Grill** - *Dubai*
- **Aprons and Hammers** - *Dubai International Marine Club*
- **Chili's** - *UAE*

BEST ASIAN
- **PF CHANG'S** - *UAE*
- **Lemongrass** - *UAE*
- **Noodle House** - *UAE*
- **Yum** - *Radisson Blu Hotel, Dubai Deira Creek*

BEST INDIAN
- **Bombay** - *Marco Polo Hotel Deira*
- **Zafran** - *Dubai*
- **Gazebo** - *Dubai*
- **Kamat** - *Dubai*

BEST MIDDLE EASTERN
- **Zataar W Zeit** - *Dubai*
- **Mezza House** - *Downtown Dubai*
- **Reem al Bawadi** - *Dubai*
- **Burj Al Hamam** - *Dubai*

BEST CAFÉ
- **Paul Café** - *Dubai*
- **The Lime Tree Café & Kitchen** - *Dubai*
- **Jones the Grocer** - *Dubai*
- **More Café** - *Dubai*

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IN THIS SECTION

✳ Expert tips for festive table-setting, **P82** ✳ An interview with Yannick Alléno, **P90** ✳ At home in a Greek kitchen, **P98** ✳ Discover Madrid's gastronomical splendours, **P104.**

Deck the table

Get inspired with these three festive table settings created by interior designer Kelley Norman, and dress up the table before laying out a divine spread.

Compiled by NICOLA MONTEATH.
Photographs CRIS MEJORADA



For a traditional table setting

Reds, golds, green and are the essence of this traditional set-up. The look is timeless and rich, but tasteful, and is something you can't go wrong with. Unmistakably festive, it is perfect for anyone looking for a cosy, country home feel. Keep the table simple and let the fabrics and ornaments shine – less is definitely more in this case!

ACHIEVE THIS LOOK: The table cloth is the most significant element of any table. Choose a plaid tablecloth in red and green, or to make it truly unique, simply visit the fabric shops in Satwa to buy the fabric and texture you like and get the hems tailored. For placemats and runners, choose rich reds and maroons as they work well with plaid.

Gold baubles add a touch of sparkle complementing the rich colours of the fabrics perfectly, and making the table look more festive. Green napkins and acorn candle stands are all you need to give the table a traditional, yet relaxed look. Mini gift boxes wrapped in red and green are the perfect way to add a festive touch in traditional colours to the table. To mix it up a bit, you can also add a hint of silver in ornaments like pinecones for a bit more sparkle.

For the centre piece, just fill a basket or vase with gold baubles and it's ready in an instant. Candles add a warm glow to any dinner table and are essential for this look. Opt for unscented candles so that the aromas of food are not masked with other fragrances, while dining. Always choose taper candles in dripless options, as you don't want wax falling all over the table.

For the plates and chargers, choose dark colours to tie it all together. To complete the festive look, place a tree ornament on top of the napkin – make sure the colour of the accessory is a shade lighter than the napkin.

PERSONALISE IT: Simply add a place card on every plate, or tie a gold string with a name card attached, to every candle stand or ornament placed near each plate.

D-I-Y TIP: For an easy way to make your own table decorations, wrap small jewellery boxes in red and green wrapping paper – or any other colours that coordinate with your table setting – and ribbons. You can also use them as alternatives to place cards by making one for each guest, and putting individual names on the gift tags; to make it extra special, you could include a small gift inside the boxes for your guests.

Product picks



Tree top glass ornaments, Dhs25 each at Ace Hardware



Antique gold leaf ornament, Dhs29 at Indigo Living.



Silver pinecones, Dhs59 each, at Crate & Barrel.





For a modern table setting

If you're looking for something more fresh, sophisticated and chic, then this stylish contemporary setting will work well. Blue and silver with whites – the white Christmas look – has become something of an alternative classic when it comes to festive tables. Stick to two main colours, with sleek, minimalist accents, to keep the table looking elegant and simple.

ACHIEVE THIS LOOK: Glittering silver star ornaments bring the festive theme to the table, while crystals placed all around, add a touch of glam. An ice bucket is a great way to combine style with functionality for this sort of a table setting, as it fills up an empty space and helps everyone keep their drinks topped up, while giving the décor an additional pop of silver.

Choose tall glass candle stands, for clear visibility, and place tea light candles in them. Coloured, decorative marbles placed around the candles will add colour, while keeping with the theme intact.

Stick to plain, minimalist silver cutlery – funky designs, rather than intricate engravings are more suited for this look. Keep the dinner plates white – providing a neutral base for the food served on it – and in keeping with the subtle colour scheme, choose a light blue napkin. To add a bit of colour, and in a nod to tradition, simply decorate with a small branch of red Ilex berries on each dinner plate.

PERSONALISE IT: Place white and silver Christmas crackers on each dinner plate, as a fun way to work in a Christmas tradition. They also make great keepsakes for guests.

Product picks



Glitter silver ornament, Dhs29 at Indigo Living.



Red Ilex berries, Dhs55 at Spinneys.



Ice bucket, Dhs89 at The One.

Christmas crackers, Dhs125 for a set of six at Marks & Spencer.







For an outdoor table setting

Christmas in the UAE offers the unique opportunity to enjoy a festive meal alfresco. Take your party to the beach for a truly unique and memorable Christmas dinner. An outdoor table combines a relaxed beach vibe with festive elegance. Alfresco dining can be stylish too, with a few clever tricks and a little effort.

ACHIEVE THIS LOOK: Take advantage of seaside finds such as seashells, colouful pebbles, or simply some sand in a glass bowl, and add these to the table to highlight the holiday theme. A regular plastic dinner table and wooden chairs will work just fine as long as they are covered and decorated.

White lanterns and candles will add a magical touch; place the lanterns in wire baskets to maintain the outdoor theme. Pack battery operated candles, if you're not using lanterns.

For tableware, use natural earthy colours – think warm browns, off-white, beige and white, and keep cutlery simple. Play around with textures for placemats – such as these wood-finished table mats shown here – or try bamboo or rattan, as they provide the typical outdoorsy feel, instead of having regular cotton fabrics.

Use white plates for the food and wooden plates to serve appetisers or bread on, for a rustic effect. Place your cutlery inside simple white napkins and wrap it with a gold ribbon, and stick a little leaf inside to give the table a festive sparkle; the leaf adds a natural touch. Dotting a few gold baubles around the table will complete the look.

If you really want to go all-out, bring a LED-lit artificial Christmas tree along for the setting. If that isn't feasible, simply decorating the table in a festive fashion is enough. This look is easily replicated in a garden as well, and can be made even more festive with fairy lights strung up all around.

PERSONALISE IT: Make name tags out of recycled or handmade paper and tie it to each person's glass stem with a piece of twine. GF

Product picks



Ivy dark green leaf, Dhs39 at Indigo Living.

Candle holder, Dhs299, at Crate & Barrel.





Cutlery set, Dhs99 for 24pcs, at Ikea.

Willow plate with LED lights and baubles, Dhs79 at Home centre.



Kelley Norman is an interior designer from Canada currently working with McNally Design International in Dubai. With over 16 years of experience in interiors, Kelly also does catering and party styling as a hobby. She can be contacted on kndesign@hotmail.com.





WIN!

Festive goodies worth over **Dhs5,000** from **The Lime Tree café & kitchen**

1 lucky winner can get a catering voucher worth Dhs3,000, while 2 winners can receive festive hampers worth Dhs1,000 each.

The Lime Tree café & kitchen, with four locations around Dubai (on Jumeirah Beach Road, Al Quoz, Ibn Battuta mall, and Dubai Media City), offers a delectable assortment of freshly baked sweet and savoury treats that can make your festive gathering truly special. The winner of the catering voucher can choose from a selection of finger foods, platters of fresh seafood, roast turkey, and gourmet cheeseboard served with artisan chutney, flatbread, crackers and rolls, plus trifles, mince pies, puddings and decadent sweets. The two lucky winners of the hampers will receive an assortment of goodies including Christmas cakes, puddings, hand-made cookies, fudge, preserves and other gourmet delicacies.

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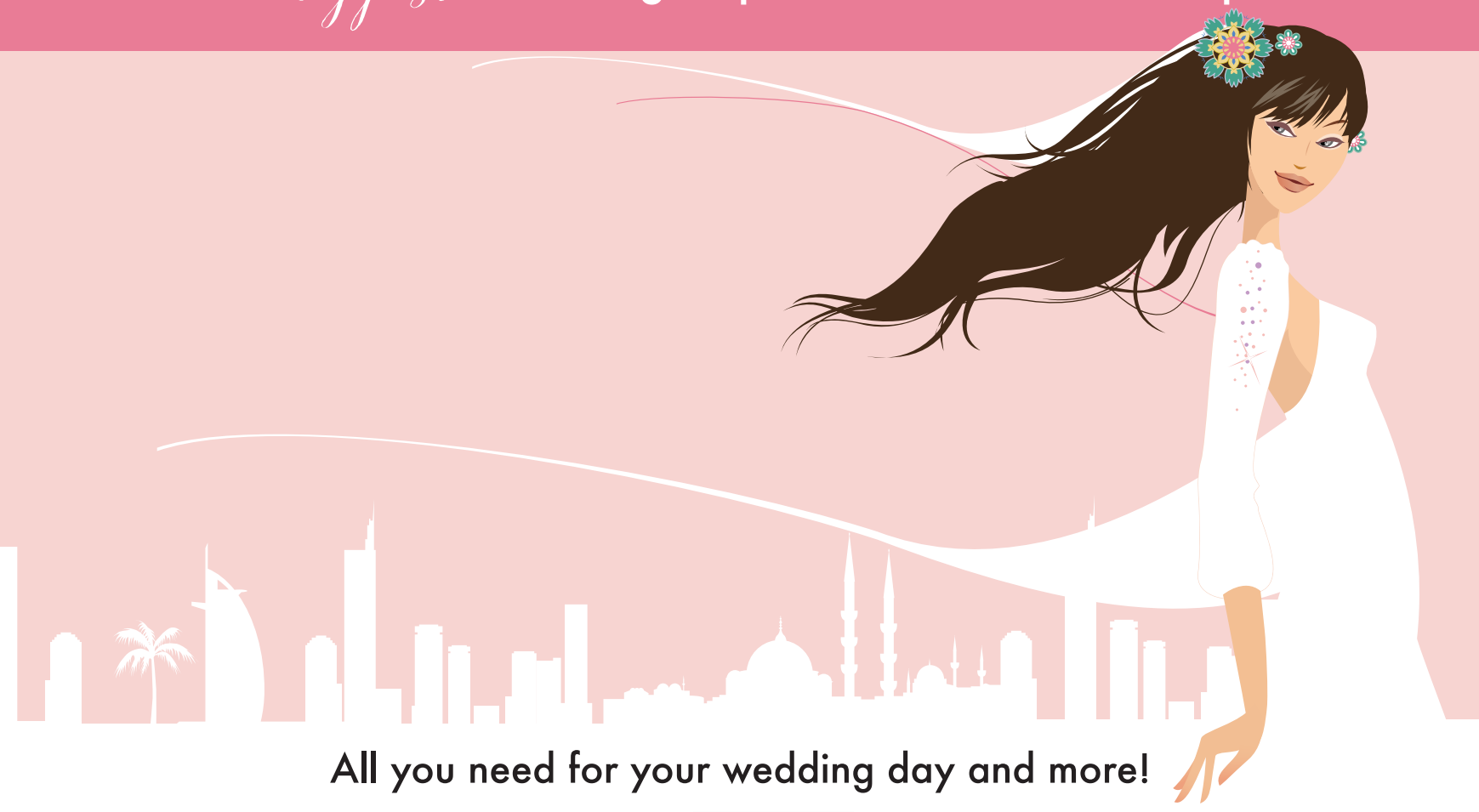
How many outlets does The Lime Tree café & kitchen have?

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Expert advice to ensure your festive parties are fabulous, yet stress-free.

THE EXPERT PANEL



Felicity Mcgrath, founder, cooking instructor and party caterer



Sudeshna Ghosh, Editor, BBC Good Food ME



Sarah Cook, Food editor, BBC Good Food UK

The festive season, while fun, can be wrought with stress, especially if you're planning to host a party at home. With everything from décor and food, to guest lists and entertainment, to think about, it isn't easy to manage. But, one of the tricks of successful entertaining is planning ahead. Follow our time-plan to make sure your holiday parties have maximum impact with minimum fuss.

3 weeks ahead

- Send out the invitations, so that people can RSVP well in time. Make sure to take note of any food allergies, intolerances or other dietary requirements of guests.
- Plan the theme for your party; do you want a formal sit-down dinner or a cocktail evening (check out our feature *Deck the table* on p90 for inspiration). Get shopping for the relevant table décor and ornaments – most of the home stores will have their Christmas collections in stock by now.
- Plan your menu, and make sure you include dishes are seasonal, yet can be made ahead, such as crab or prawn mousse wrapped in smoked salmon; roasted red pepper soup; traditional sides such as roast potatoes and spiced red cabbage; tarts, and garlic and herb breads, and desserts like meringue roulade with cream. Take into account the multicultural nature of the UAE, and your guests' different tastes.
- If you are cooking a turkey or ham, place your order and discuss requirements with the butcher – what size, whether you want bone in or boneless, and fresh or frozen. If you are opting for turkey takeaway, put your order in now.



2 weeks ahead

- Write down your shopping lists – with dates to remind you of when they are for, if you are entertaining more than once during the Christmas period. Get the shopping for all your non perishables such as tin foil, drinks, wax paper and essential ingredients such as breadcrumbs, flour, and butter, out of the way.
- Stock up on some ready-made nibbles – they are handy to have stashed away for unexpected guests.
- Make all your sauces and stocks and store in sterilised jars.
- Finalise your guest list, and make necessary adjustments to menu and seating arrangements.
- Do a practice run of your table setting, so you know if you have everything you need. Fresh flowers are always a winner for dinner tables, and you can also get creative with jars filled with fresh herbs, vases filled with lemons and limes, or bowls of cinnamon sticks – they will be vibrant, and add wonderful aromas to the atmosphere.



- Prepare your music playlist – make sure to include some seasonal tunes to get everyone into that festive spirit.

A week ahead

- Go through recipes of dishes that need to be cooked up on the day, to allocate time for each.
- Make your starters, soup, Christmas pudding and other desserts – these can be frozen and re-heated on the day.
- Main courses can also be made ahead and frozen – store them in portions of eight. Some recipes can be partially made ahead (See our feature *The Big Day* on p48 for menu ideas), get as much of the cooking out of the way as possible. Stock up on things vanilla ice cream, stores may run out of stock closer to the day.
- Order fresh flowers and ask for it to be delivered one day before.

Two days before

- Decide what cutlery, crockery and utensils you want to use and make sure it's cleaned and ready. Write down the name of the foods you will serve and label each serving dish – when the time comes to serve, and things are a bit frantic, you'll know exactly where to put what.
- Stock up on all your fresh vegetables and meats, vegetables, herbs, creams and cheeses and other ingredients.
- Chill your beverages – if you haven't got enough fridge or freezer space, they can always be stored in freezer boxes.

A day before

- Get the house cleaned thoroughly.
- Set the table in advance, if you aren't using it that night.
- Pick up the turkey, ham or chicken. Begin preparations – depending on the time required to cook your main courses.
- Make the stuffing, and sides including potatoes and sprouts, and keep them ready.
- Complete your mise en place for the rest of the menu, with all the washing and chopping out of the way, leaving just the last of the cooking for the next day.

On the day

- Remove starters, stock and desserts from the freezer and allow about 3 hours thawing in a cool place. Get your main course dishes cooking nice and early.
- Prepare your welcome cocktails, nibbles and cheese platter.
- Light up candles half an hour before guests are due to arrive, turn the music on, and check everything is in its place – your home should look festive and ready before the first guests arrive, and not have you running around with last minute preparations.



- Leave aside at least an hour to get ready, and relax – so you can enjoy your party too!

Coordinated by NICOLA MONTEATH



WIN!

Chocolate Christmas treats from **Lindt**, worth over **Dhs5,000**

24 lucky winners can win a 1kg Lindt chocolate Santa, worth Dhs250 each!





Lindt, the Master Swiss chocolatier was established in 1845, and has been providing sensationally smooth and sweet chocolate treats since. This festive season, enjoy a variety of chocolate treats including the Lindt bear and classic gold reindeer – all made out of pure Swiss milk chocolate. 24 lucky winners can get their hands on a 1 kg chocolate Santa, made from fine milk chocolate and finished with a luxurious gold bell. The Santa is the perfect stocking filler gift, as to dress up a festive table.

Log on bbcgoodfoodme.com to enter this competition and simply answer this question:

Which year was Lindt established?

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Of restaurants and relationships...

Multiple Michelin star French chef Yannick Alléno shares his philosophy on success and love (they aren't that different!) in an exclusive chat with Sudeshna Ghosh. Photographs CRIS MEJORADA

Yannick Alléno knows he's a charmer. He's all too familiar with the stereotypes of dashing Frenchmen who can make women go all giggly and weak in the knees, and boy, does he work it! But he does it so effortlessly, and so smoothly, that you barely notice you're being charmed. Combined with a humility and friendliness belying his iconic status as one of the gastronomic world's greatest, he is very easy to like.

But, it isn't just charm and good looks that earned him three coveted Michelin stars, and international recognition. Ask him for the secret to his success, and pat comes the answer – hard work. "I'm a hard worker. I feel fortunate that I have a talent, but when you have that, you have to work to make things happen," he says. "I work 90-100 hours a week, because I love my work. I create over 200 recipes a year. If you're not in the kitchen working hard, you're in the s***!"

"It's the same for love – relationships take work," he adds. "When you have something good, you have to work hard to maintain it. Whether it's restaurants or love, it's the same formula – that's my philosophy."

Never were truer words spoken by this happily married father of two, who started working in restaurants when he was just 15. "My parents had bistros in Paris, and I used to help my mother in the kitchen. Not being a chef wasn't really an option for me," he says.

GETTING THE GROUNDWORK RIGHT

Although he is now known for giving traditional cuisine a modern interpretation, he spent a long time mastering the basics; according to him, only after conquering tradition can you successfully experiment with modernity. "The problem is when you get too creative without the fundamental knowledge. It's like art – you need a level of maturity. It's important to start with the basics, then experiment. Without that, the technique masks the produce," he says.

And respecting the produce is critical to Yannick's culinary style, whose inspiration always comes from 'the product'. "I try to find different produce and techniques that has been lost

through the generations," he explains. "We have a responsibility towards the ecology, and I don't know why 'sustainable eating' ever went out of fashion."

Ruing the loss of tradition in French cuisine that modernisation seems to have caused, he says, "Countries like China and Japan have retained their traditions, but in France, people stopped to think about this sort of thing from about the 11th century. In the past, France was the hub of the culinary world, of Europe, but the level of restaurants in France has gone down. There are now fewer Michelin star restaurants in Paris than there are in Tokyo or New York."

Speaking of gourmet hubs, while Dubai may not have any Michelin stars under its belt yet, that doesn't stop Yannick from predicting it has the potential to become a global culinary destination. "Dubai is becoming the hub of the world, and you will see the influence of that in food. The level is very good here, there is a lot of diversity."

A LIFELONG PASSION

Diversity seems very important to Yannick, as he understands that people come to fine dining restaurants for a certain experience. "The visual aspect is important, as you start the dining experience with your eyes. But the flavour is more important, it is important to make it sexy!" he says. "To do my job well, I need diversity."

And his job he does very well indeed. With various restaurants around the world – including in France, Morocco, Asia, and of course, Dubai – Yannick could well afford to be one of those chefs who lends his name, and little else, to his global outposts. But he makes it a point to personally visit his restaurants often, and get involved, including working hands-on in the kitchen (something we can vouch for, having enjoyed a five course meal cooked up by the man himself during his last visit). "The concept of my STAY restaurants (there is one in Beijing and Taipei, aside from Dubai) is Simple Table. You get Michelin star worthy food, but in a relaxed and casual environment, not too chi chi!" he smiles.

That he still enjoys and feels a passion for what he does, is evident in the way the 43-year old chef becomes animated when talking about 'creation'. "Creating a dish can happen all of a sudden. It can take three days, or three weeks, it all depends," he reveals, talking about his test kitchen in Paris, where he does most of his menu development from. And when he's not busy in the test kitchen, he's never too far from food, as he still goes to the market with his wife, and cooks at home every Sunday.

Here, he shares some of his recipes that made their way out of his test kitchen into his restaurant menus, to inspire.

SIGNATURE RECIPES

King crab salad with buffalo mozzarella, avocado and tomato

SERVES 4

2 romaine lettuce
4 king crab legs large size
1 ball of mozzarella di buffalo
1 avocado
2g ascorbic acid
8 tomato confits
50ml extra virgin olive oil
Fleur de sel
Espelette pepper (available at specialty stores, or can be substitured with cayenne pepper)
Fine salt
White pepper corn
15g unsalted butter
2g curry powder
Espelette pepper
Fleur de sel
Extra virgin olive oil
FOR LEMON CORAIL MAYONNAISE
2 egg yolk
30g Dijon mustard
250ml grape seed oil
50ml lemon olive oil
20ml lemon juice
1 lemon
Fine salt
Corail powder (can be substituted with paprika powder)
FOR CRACKERS
2 Chinese ravioli sheets
Espelette pepper
½ chives bunch
20ml garlic olive oil
Fleur de sel
20ml cooking olive oil

1 Shell the king crab leg, use only the biceps part and remove the cartilage. Season with salt and white pepper corn. With cling film, tightly roll the leg and cook in a steam oven for 5 mins at 95 degres, then cool down in a chiller.
2 Strain the mozzarella ball, cut it in 8 pieces and season with extra virgin olive oil, the fleur de sel and espelette pepper, wrap and keep in the chiller.
3 Peel the avocado, mix the ascorbic acid in water, cut some slices of avocado and keep in the ascorbic acid water for few seconds, then strain and dry them. Place the avocado slices on a tray, season with extra virgin olive oil and the espelette pepper. Wrap and keep in the chiller.



4 Wash the romaine lettuce properly, remove the first dirty leaf and cut them in half, keep in the chiller.
5 To make the mayonnaise, in a mixing bowl, beat the yolk, the Dijon mustard and the salt until very thick and pale yellow. Add the oil drop by drop, beating vigorously all the while and keep going until it reaches a thick consistency. Finish by adding the lemon juice, the lemon zest and the corail powder. Refrigerate in a sealed container.
6 To make the crackers, first chop the chives. Brush some water on the first ravioli sheet, sprinkle some chopped chives and espelette pepper, close nicely with the second ravioli sheet. Flatten very thin with a pastry roll and roast on a plancha if you have one, or roast on a non-stick frying pan with a little bit of oil. and press with the spatula until crispy, blonde and thin. Brush the thin crust with the garlic olive oil, add the fleur de sel. Keep in an airtight container.
7 Remove the cling film from the king crab, and season with the curry powder. In a frying pan, melt the butter and roast the crab leg gently, drain on a paper towel. Cut into triangular shapes, 3 pieces per person. Season the half romaine with olive oil and fleur de sel, and serve.

Slow cooked John Dory with pilaf rice

SERVES 4

4 John Dory fillets (around 120g each)
100ml avocado oil
Salt
White pepper corn
FOR CITRUS DRESSING
8g acacia honey
16g orange jus
32g avocado oil
½ coriander bunch
FOR THE PILAF RICE
500g nisiki rice (available at Japanese specialty stores)
850g water
1 bouquet garni
36g chicken stock cube
120g white onion, chopped
80g unsalted butter
2 avocados
1 grapefruit
1 orange
1 lemon
Espelette pepper
Fleur de sel

1 To make the pilaf, first peel, wash and chop the white onion. Bring some water to the boil in a pot, and add the stock cube to make the stock. In a pan, melt the butter, add the chopped onions, little bit of salt and cook slowly for few minutes. Add the rice and cook for few minutes, then add the boiled chicken stock and the bouquet garni. When it comes to the boil, cover with a lid and cook in an oven at 200C for 16 to 19 mins. Set aside to cool.
2 In a mixing bowl, add the honey, mix with the orange jus and add in the avocado oil drop by drop, beating throughout. Then add the chopped coriander.
3 Peel and dice the grapefruit, orange and lemon. Cut the avocado in quarters, and combine with the citrus dice in a mixing bowl. Add the espelette pepper and the fleur de sel.
4 Season the John Dory filet and roll it in the avocado oil, cook it slowly under a salamander or in an oven grill.
5 Serve fish with the pilaf and citrus salad. GF





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MY KITCHEN

Richard likes the simplicity of the galley layout. He enjoys preparing food undisturbed, while still being able to chat with guests



The Miele built-in steam oven, with a pull-out container for water, is Richard's favourite piece of equipment

Richard Corrigan

Country-born UK chef Richard Corrigan, a regular on BBC's Great British Menu show, has opted for a modern, urban kitchen. He gives Vanessa Berridge a tour.

Photographs GEOFF WILKINSON

Wholesome, uncomplicated, home-grown food is key to the cooking style that has won Richard Corrigan many awards, including two Michelin stars at a string of London restaurants, including Lindsay House in Soho. Richard left Ireland to work first in the Netherlands for four years, then in London, where he progressed to head chef of Mulligan's in Mayfair.

He was one of the four chefs who won the BBC's Great British Menu challenge to cook for the Queen's 80th birthday, and has also cooked for Tony Blair at No 10. He has successfully revived Bentley's Seafood Bar and Grill in London, and more recently launched a Bentley's in Dublin, as well as another London branch in Harrods. Since November 2008, he's been chef/patron of Corrigan's, Mayfair.

He lives in north London with his wife, Maria, and their children, Richie, 21, Jessica, 15, and Robbie, 11.

Tell us about your home and kitchen

Since we moved here three years ago, I've been dedicated to opening my Mayfair restaurant. It's taken up my life. That's why I liked this house, it had been completely refurbished by a Dutch couple so there was nothing for me to do. As I've spent time in the Netherlands, I feel at home with their style, with the big space and high ceilings. And the kitchen was just right – a simple, functional, uncluttered space.

Although I'm a farmer's son, I'm not one for country kitchens in town. I don't want my pans hanging out of the rafters – that's fine in the country, but this is a fast-moving, urban environment.

I like the way the kitchen is open plan on to the living area, but down the steps, so it's still separate. It's a lovely space, particularly when lots of people are around. I can be cooking down here, with no one wrecking my head, but I can see what's going on.

What do you need in your kitchen?

When I'm in the restaurant, I'm always running around. This is my stress-free zone, where I relax. I just need a place that heats the bottom of a pan, so the kitchen does very well. I have an oven and a built-in steamer, which I use all the time. We have a spreading-out dining area for when the whole family is here, but even if there are only two of us, we still eat at the table in the kitchen – we don't do counter-eating in this house.

How does the kitchen work for you?

I love cooking galleys where everything is beside me, as it is here. Everything has a purpose and is in the right place, and there's plenty of worktop space. I like granite as a surface – I have it in my Mayfair kitchen, too.

Anything you're not happy with?

I'm not a huge fan of the halogen hob because I can't cook on it with my Swedish cast-iron frying pan. And I'm not keen on the downlighters – I'm replacing them with energy-efficient alternatives. I'd also have two sinks rather than one and a half.

Final thoughts?

If I were doing recipe testing, I'd completely change the kitchen, and have two ovens and a bigger hob. But we test recipes in the restaurant kitchen, so I've got all I need here. I'm very happy with the layout. It's easy, simple and it works. It's also the most fantastic chill-out space.



The family always sits together for meals at this table, rather than eating off kitchen countertops





Long handles are both functional and aesthetically pleasing



The smoked glass cupboard doors are hinged horizontally

RICHARD'S TIPS

- If you don't use your kitchen very often, think very carefully about what you actually need before you spend huge amounts of money on it.
- Have a really well-designed hob and fridge. Other furniture may be important from the visual aspect, but it's irrelevant in terms of functionality.
- Get a decent set of knives. It will be expensive, but it'll be a good investment because they'll stay sharp for years.
- Recycle and have a composter, if you have the space.

GET THE LOOK



Get precise cuts of meat and vegetables with this set of razor-sharp knives, Dhs679 at Crate & Barrel.



Stainless steel pots, like this Fissler original pro stew pot,Dhs1,100 at Tavola, are an essential in Richard's kitchen.



The Bosch Vero Bar 600, Dhs4,699 at Sharaf DG stores, makes a fresh cup of coffee with the touch of a button.



This Daytona T-Dining leather chair with Tuf, Dhs1,950 at Marina Interiors, gives the dining table a luxurious look.



The Bali Eiche Cornwall smoked glass, horizontally hinged cupboards are available at Hacker Kitchens, from Dhs18,800.

Everything's *fine!*

The inaugural international Fine Foods Festival held last month at Meydan saw a unique coming together of local producers, chefs, suppliers and foodies.

Photographs CRIS MEJORADA



Freshly baked bread was on offer at the Posh Picnic



Visitors stopped by the *BBC Good Food ME* stand to say hello



Local producers and farmers displaed their wares

The Grandstand C area of Meydan was a hive of foodie activity from October 3-November 2, with the relative calm of the roads and parking area belying the excitement in the air, inside. The debut International Fine Foods Festival, a unique event which combined a market-style shopping area (Posh Picnic), chef competitions (Golden Toque), short seminars and author interactions (Cookbook club), stood out as a first of its kind in the region, with its focus on sustainable, wholesome food. Exclusive media partner *BBC Good Food ME* was there too, supporting the event.

According to festival organiser Claire Tinston, "The mark of an affluent society is that it has the luxury to question. This region has a high disposable income and so we are able to afford foods which are of the highest value. But it also means that we have an educated consumer who asks questions about those foods and where they come from. As the market is saturated with processed goods, it is time we focused on sustainability, and sourcing food as close to its natural state as possible. It is easy to accept what is available but takes courage to question the norm."

It was definitely a brave step for Claire who almost singlehandedly spearheaded the entire event, from concept to execution, driven by her personal passion for the issue. What was encouraging was the warmth with which the event was received. IFFF brought together UAE's foodie community, whether it was culinary personalities like Michael Kitts and Suzanne Husseini, or food suppliers, restaurateurs, chefs and independent growers, in a way that was unusually democratic.

"We believe that we have levelled the playing field by allowing all involved in the International Fine Food Festival to showcase their produce on the same platform at our Posh Picnic, and not allowing marketing budgets to provide an unfair advantage. We have managed to showcase the smaller producer who is at the heart of food," explains Claire.

Green gourmet

The Posh Picnic was a highlight for visitors, who got to wander around sampling and shopping for products from different producers and gourmet suppliers, from fine cheeses and honey, to locally farmed vegetables. Participants such as Organiliciouz, an independent Sharjah-based organic farm were delighted at the opportunity to showcase their offerings. "People in this region have started to become more educated and more conscious about their health and what they are feeding themselves and their families," says Obaid Bin Ghubash from Organiliciouz.

Lokesh Aswani, founder of Down to Earth Organics Dubai, who were also exhibiting at the Posh Picnic, added, "The planet has a resource crunch at the moment and our lifestyle is a big contribution to it. The way we live and eat affects the economy and everything around us. Which is why it makes sense to go organic, as well as reduce carbon footprint."

The reason behind sustainable eating being a relatively new trend in this region isn't rocket science – we live in the middle of the desert! But, as a growing number of local producers, and an increasing demand for local, seasonal and fresh food products is showing, it isn't impossible.

"Just because we live in the desert doesn't mean we should just give up and not think about these issues. In fact to me, it highlights certain issues such as water preservation, and actually tends to make us more aware of issues that we might not normally focus on as much, in a self-sustainable region," says Claire.

Obaid adds, "It was initially very challenging for us, but over the years we have learnt to understand the land and the climate and are now able to produce an amazing selection of wholesome, organic, fresh produce."

According to Tony Colley, founder of gourmet food supplier Oakleaf ME, "Seasonality is key, as you need to put less effort into a dish to make it tasty, when the produce itself is of good quality."

Cook-off central

There was no dearth of tasty food at the event, as chefs from top restaurants around the region competed for various prizes including the main award, the Golden Toque East 2012, which was taken home by private chef Tomas Reger, who was chosen by a respected judging panel featuring the likes of Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management Salon Director Michael Kitts, award-winning pastry chef Claire Clark MBE, wellbeing chef Gabriele Kurz, and cookbook authors Ariana Bundy and Suzanne Husseini.

In the restaurant category, The Farm beat off fierce competition from the Rhodes Mezzanine team to win the Chef's Table award. The Amuse Bouche competition offered junior chefs a chance to showcase their talents, with the public trying out their bite-sized offerings created from products supplied by the exhibitors.

Highlighting slow-grown, premium quality, line caught and matured foods to encourage nose-to-tail eating and a new perspective on foods altogether, the festival was an important benchmark of this newish trend in the UAE's food scene, and here's hoping it grows in years to come.


Chefs battling it out


Junior chefs also got to showcase their skills

COOKBOOK CLUB

The cookbook club hosted by Ariana Bundy author of *Pomegranates and Roses* (Bloomsbury) and Suzanne Husseini author of *When Suzanne Cooks* (Motivate), attracted a large number of fans – predominantly women – who gathered to share their interests and passion for cooking, and the importance of eating sustainably. To participate, interested foodies had to register beforehand to get a recipe from each book to re-create at home. They then shared their experience with the authors and other members of the cookbook club at the event, while Ariana and Suzanne also discussed the importance of a healthy lifestyle and diet in the Middle East, the ways in which food has significantly influenced their lives, and how they stay true to their culture and roots, through food and cooking.

DRINK UP!

So you knew that it is important to pair the right wines with the right food – did you know that there are some rules which apply to water pairing with food too? The Aqua Panna Water & Wine pairing sessions at IFFF – which worked in a similar way to a wine tasting, in which you sampled different kinds of wines and waters, such as sparkling, still and tap – had sommelier Magalie Sohas sharing her top tips on serving water the right way:

- Sparkling water pairs well with red wine and heavier foods, while white wine is best complemented by still water, and foods that match, such as fish and seafood.
- Don't add lemon to sparkling water – it kills the flavour.
- Sparkling water tastes best when served at 8-10C temperatures, while still water should be served at 10-12C.



Food Safari: Greece

Each month, we dip into the UAE's multicultural melting pot to discover a new cuisine.



When we found out that Majestic Hotel's PR and Marketing Director, Sophia Fay Economides hails from gorgeous Greece, and her grandmother – whom Fay and her daughter Maria call Yaya (Grandmother in Greek) - lives here in Dubai, we knew we had to get into the kitchen and watch them cook. Nothing like having a grandmother on hand to advise on food!

An avid foodie who not only loves cooking and dining out, Fay is also involved in the restaurant business, in her role managing marketing of the various outlets of the hotel (which includes Dubai's only authentic Greek restaurant, Elia). Living in Dubai for seven years now, Fay has been in the region for quite some time – she grew up in Bahrain – but it is her yearly visits to Greece, and culture and languages classes she received as a child, that keep her close to her Greek heritage. Hailing from Halandri, a town in Northern Athens, the one fact that comes to mind when she thinks about her home town is that it has the highest number of restaurants per residence in the area. "I miss the beaches, the perfect weather, lush greenery, big family gatherings, and also the culture of opera houses and theatres," says Fay.

Food is an important element of Greek culture and is well known globally, but Fay believes it has a lot of stereotypes associated with it. "There's much more to Greek cuisine than Greek salads, moussaka and souvlaki," she says.

Greece, an island nation located in southern Europe, is surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea on the south, Ionian sea on the west, and the Aegan Sea on the east. With 20 per cent of the country made up of islands, seafood is naturally an important part of their cuisine. The Mediterranean climatic conditions allow for plenty of fruit and vegetables to be produced in the region; these include lemons, olives, zucchini, garlic, eggplant and spices such as basil, thyme and mint. "In Greece, most of the shops sell only local produce. People rarely buy imported vegetables and fruits – unless it is an exotic fruit such as mango – that aren't grown in Greece. We have everything produced in the region, from cheese and Aegean pistachios, to some of the best wines," says Fay.

A few staples on every Greek dining table are feta cheese, olive oil and bread. Traditional cuisine varies throughout the seasons, with lighter foods such as stuffed tomatoes with rice and garlic and a lot of vegetable and seafood dishes such as fried calamari and mussels eaten during the summer. In winter, the food is more sauce-based and includes rich slow cooked meats with rice, pasta or potatoes. Herbs and spices commonly used are parsley, dill, cinnamon, pimento, cloves, oregano and allspice powder.

Even though the country is going through a financial crisis at the moment, the Greeks have always been very welcoming and tourism is an important part of the locals' lives. Fay says, "Greeks love their food and dine out most of the time at neighborhood tavernas (small restaurants serving

Text & Food styling NICOLA MONTEATH | Additional photography CRIS MEJORADA



authentic Greek cuisine). I remember visiting these and tucking into traditional favourites such as homemade lamb chops, meats slow roasted in clay pots and fresh seafood and grills."

Cooking was sort of inevitable for Fay. "My mom and both grandmothers started delegating cooking tasks to me during my teenage years," she smiles. But it was only when she headed to university in UK, that she really began cooking. "I missed home cooked food so would call my mother and ask her how to make roast lemon chicken and Yiouvetsi – lamb or beef with pasta," she says. Yaya adds in a few dishes that she remembers being contacted for back in the day, such as Pastichio – which also happens to be one of her specialties. Faye however insists that Pastichio wasn't something she cooked back then, as it is too time-consuming!

As they banter affectionately like this, with Maria bouncing in and out of the room throughout, the shared love for food amongst them, across all three generations, is obvious. Happiest in the kitchen, Fay cooks and delights us with her foodie experiences, with her daughter Maria watching closely, as she slowly folds the ingredients into the cake mix and helps by putting a spoonful or two in herself, while Yaya supervises.

As we chat about our excitement about the festive season, Yaya reminisces about traditional Christmas food, saying, "We make Kourie, a cookie similar to shortbread with icing sugar, along with turkey and other dishes." Greeks are very particular about their traditions, especially food related ones. For instance, a New Years day tradition is to bake Vasilopita (a soft cake), inside which a coin is hidden; the person that gets the slice with the coin gets gifts and is said to have a lot of luck that year.

We asked Fay and her Yaya to share their family recipes for three authentic Greek dishes, one of them being Yiouvarlakia. "It's one of my favourite dishes ever – apart from chicken nuggets," Maria chimes in. Recreating Greek flavours in your kitchen are easier than you think!



Faye has always been close to her mother

Yaya, the baking goddess!

Faye has enjoyed being in the kitchen since she was a teenager





Spanakopita (Spinach pie)

SERVES 8

1 kg fresh or frozen spinach
1 large onion
1 bunch spring onions
½ cup dill, chopped
½ cup olive oil (could use more or less – to taste)
1 ½ cup feta cheese, crumbled
1 egg, lightly beaten
500g pack of filo sheets
Freshly ground pepper

1 Preheat oven to 175C. Lightly oil a 35X25cm rectangular baking pan.
2 Steam the spinach and drain. Sauté onion and spring onions, in few tbsp of olive oil, until soft and lightly browned. Stir in spinach, and sauté until spinach is limp, about 2 mins. Remove from heat and set aside to cool.
3 In a medium bowl, mix together spinach, egg and feta. Lay 1 sheet of filo dough in prepared baking pan, and brush lightly with olive oil. Repeat the process with three more sheets of filo, ensuring the edges extend beyond the edges of the pan. Repeat until you have used half the filo sheets in the packet.
4 Spread the spinach mixture into pan and fold 1 sheet of the overhanging dough over the filling. Brush with oil, then layer remaining sheets of filo dough, one by one, brushing each with oil. Tuck overhanging dough at the sides of the pan to seal filling.
5 Bake in preheated oven for 45 mins, until golden brown. Cut into squares and serve warm.



Yiouvarlakia (Greek meatballs in augolemono sauce)

SERVES 4

500g ground beef
¼ cup calrose rice
1 large onion, grated
½ cup fresh dill
1 tbsp olive oil
FOR THE AUGOLMONO SAUCE
1l water
1 egg
2 medium sized lemons
1 chicken stock cube
2 tbsp olive oil

1 In a large bowl knead the beef with the onion, dill and rice with 1 tbsp olive oil.
2 Roll the kneaded mixture into meatballs. Set aside.
3 Bring water to boil along with the stock cube and olive oil. Add the meatballs and let them simmer for 1 hr on low heat, covered.
4 Beat the egg with the juice of the lemons. Turn off the heat on the pot, and very slowly and gradually add the egg and lemon mixture to the meatballs while it is off the heat. Move the pot from side to side, so that you are shaking it, or else the mixture will set and become thick.
5 After 2 mins, put it back on the heat to boil for 2 more mins. Serve hot with crusty bread.



Greek walnut syrup cake

SERVES 8

6 eggs
1 cup sugar
1 cup bread crumbs
1½ tsp baking powder
2 tsp cinnamon
1 tsp allspice powder
1½ cups walnuts, finely chopped
FOR THE SYRUP
2 cups sugar
2 cups water
1 tsp lemon juice
3 tsp cognac (optional)

1 Beat the eggs with sugar on high speed for 15 mins, until light, fluffy and pale colour.
2 Mix the breadcrumbs with cinnamon, allspice powder and baking powder.
3 Add this mixture to the beaten eggs, slowly and gradually, folding it in with a large spoon, one generous spoonful at a time, so that the egg mixture does not deflate. Gently add the walnuts, one spoonful at a time, while mixing constantly. Spread the mixture into a greased pan. Bake at 175C for 35 mins.
4 While it's baking, prepare the syrup by boiling water, sugar and lemon for 5 mins. Set aside to cool, then add the cognac to the syrup and mix well.
5 Remove the cake from the oven and add the syrup one spoonful at a time pouring evenly over the cake. Don't pour the syrup all at once, as the cake will deflate.
6 Serve at room temperature, with whipped cream or a scoop of vanilla ice cream.



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BALI BITES

Get the Eat of your Eat, Pray, Love moment sorted at The Chedi Club Tanah Gajah, Singaporean chef Khairudin 'Dean' Nor has introduced a destination-inspired menu, using ingredients from the resort's organic gardens, fishpond and rice paddies. With Balinese-influenced international flavours, the resort's fine dining restaurant offers home-grown produce, homemade ice cream, duck and salmon smoked on-site, and a level of personalisation that is unique; guests can just ask the award-winning chef to toss up something they fancy, and their wish will be fulfilled. A meal like that would probably cover prayer and love as well for us! Visit www.GHMhotels.com for details.



Food for the Plane Jane!

A recent survey by maidenvoyage.com, a business travel network for women, has revealed that 76 per cent of women travellers found in-flight meals unsuitable for their needs, being too carbohydrate-heavy and suitable for male passengers. Only 20 per cent of women travelling on low-cost flights said they purchase in-flight food, as they find the snack options unhealthy. With most female business travellers being diet-conscious, it's certainly food for thought for airlines.



Spiralling around the globe

The Sofitel Philippine Plaza has reopened its iconic Spirals restaurant, a 2,500 sq.m space that is divided into 21 different zones serving up food from cuisines as varied as Japanese, Korean and Thai, to Latin American, Indian and French. Asian street stall meets French market-style liveliness in the restaurant where specialised chefs ensure the food stays true to its roots. Sounds like reason enough to get on a flight to Manila! Visit www.sofitelmanila.com.

MUSCAT MACARONS

Like these little French sweet treats? You'll love the Oman-inspired flavours created by Executive Pastry Chef of The Chedi Muscat, Gregory Legros. Using local ingredients for the fillings, the flavours include Al Jabal Al Akhdar Pomegranate, and this month's special macaron, the Samayil Al Safarjal Macaroon (featuring Omani big sweet lemon). Call +968 24 52 44 01 for more.



HEAD TO HARRODS

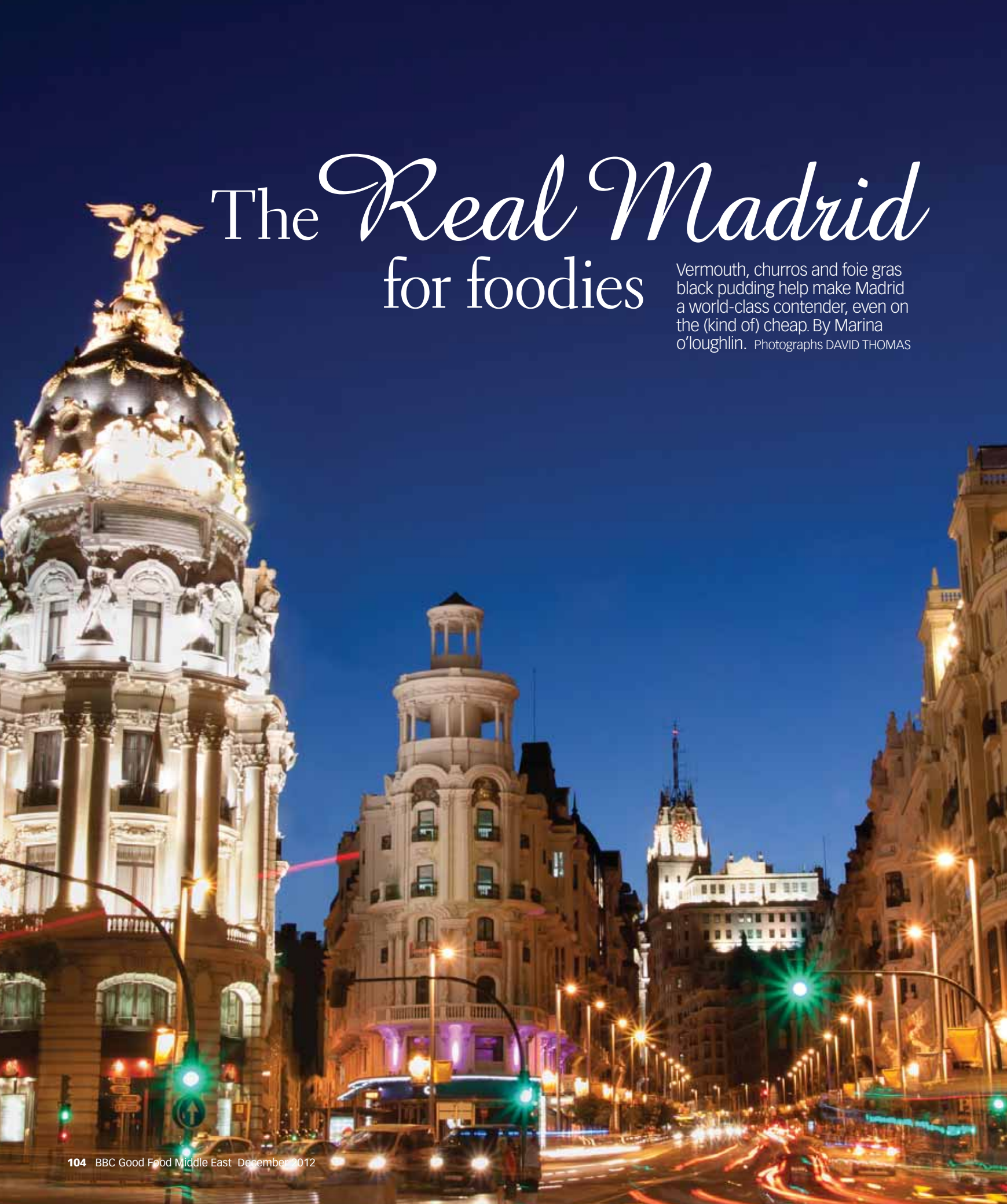


If you're in London town this month, make a beeline for the new(ish) Bentleys Sea Grill restaurant in Harrods' iconic food hall, to feast on fresh seafood, while taking in the festive atmosphere. Patron chef Richard Corrigan (check out our feature on his kitchen on p102) promises Britishness at its best. harrods.com.

Compiled by SUDESHNA GHOSH

The *Real Madrid* for foodies

Vermouth, churros and foie gras black pudding help make Madrid a world-class contender, even on the (kind of) cheap. By Marina O'Loughlin. Photographs DAVID THOMAS





There's no doubt that, eating-wise, Madrid is up there with the world's greats, every bit as rewarding as Tokyo or New York. But is it possible to get the full dazzle without heading for the big hitters? I've decided that this trip isn't going to be about eating in wallet-torturing Michelins, but day-to-day places where the famous Madrileño chickpea stew rules, and bills are as small as a Calle Serrano fashionista's waist.

It's not easy, since we're staying at the glossy Villa Magna (Madonna stays here when she's in town) on the fringes of Salamanca, where pavements are lined with Prada, and Madrid's super-rich live, play and eat. Fortunately, across the Paseo de la Castellana is funky, bustling Chueca. Here we find Bar Tomate (grupotragaluz.com). It may be full of the local equivalent of yuppies – do we still say yuppie? – but food from the fragrant, wood-fired oven is excellent and reasonably priced. It gets top marks for stocking cult wine Belondrade y Lurton, a truly luscious verdejo. I love that even the cool kids happily neck jugs of sangria.

Further in towards Malasaña, things get quirkier and more interesting. The newly fabulous Mercado San Anton (mercadosananton.com) is a wonderful reimagining of an old city market, selling anything from the finest Ibérico ham to sushi and spoonfuls of foie gras. Around here especially, the streets are lined with enticing bars and restaurants. We ignore the funky concrete and glass jobs (the one at the top of the market looks particularly happening), choosing instead the atmospheric little Taberna la Dominga (ladominga.es) with its zinc bar, decorative tiles and menu del dia, featuring three courses of home-style cooking including gazpacho and the famous stew.

Here, we hook up with journalist and Madrid expert, Annie Bennett, who whisks us through the city. My favourite stop is Bodega de la Ardosa (laardosa.es), a venerable hole-in-the-wall rammed with casks, hams and a million signed photos of everyone from Frank Sinatra to, well, I think it's the owner's mum. They pour frosty fino sherry in almost-half-pint measures and serve wonderful, fruity salmorejo (like a thicker, more intense gazpacho) and morcilla de foie. Foie gras black pudding. There's Guinness, too, and the fashionable-again vermut on tap.

Then on to Juana La Loca in La Latina (4 Plaza Puerta de Moros, 0034 91 364 0525) – one of Annie's favourites, and no wonder. It has a killer menu, mainly Basque-style, with the odd exotic touch such as albacore carpaccio or the world's largest burrata. It's justifiably famous for its outrageously squidgy caramelised onion tortilla. Just a stagger away from the bar-lined but touristy Cava Baja, it's the ideal place to grab a table after the madness of the Rastro flea market, if you can get near it for the crowd of arty locals.

The areas around major transport hubs usually attract fairly downbeat (aka scuzzy) eating options. And El Brillante, opposite the botanic-garden-like Atocha Station, isn't going to win any beauty competitions. But this long, clattery cafeteria, complete with requisite grouchy waiters, has two secret weapons. Light, greaseless, salty-sweet churros with chocolate, and their famous Madrileño speciality, bocadillo de calamares: just-fried squid rings packed into a floury baguette, like an Iberian po'boy. We don't bother with anything else, though – this isn't the place for it.

Back in Salamanca, we're the only non-locals in bustling Marisqueria El Cantabrico (marisqueriaelcantabrico.es). This is the kind of basic, blue-tiled place you find in Galicia where an orgy of seafood costs buttons. I fondly imagine I speak fluent menu Spanish, but accidentally order three different kinds of crab – centollo, buey de mar and nécora – an idiocy that ends up making a mockery of our so-called budget.

We're wowed by the foodie paradise that is Mercado de San Miguel



(mercadodesanmiguel.es). Sure, it's touristy, but there are plenty of natives there too, drinking vermut, slurping ices or eating the most ravishing mini burgers from Meating Point (hamburguesanostra.com). But I think it's the Iberico pork chicharròn that disappoint – you'd think finest acorn-fed pork scratchings would be delicious, but they're like eating extruded polystyrene.

So we cheat and go to Le Cabrera (lecabrera.com) in Las Salesas. It may be lowish-key, but it's owned by Michelin-starred Sergi Arola. Oh my goodness, it's good. Coming on like a louche cocktail bar, the menu looks like any conventional tapas joint. But what arrives is anything but conventional – 'patatas bravas', perfect tubes of crisp, fried potato with taste-bombs of chilli sauce and aïoli cleverly hidden inside; a seared fillet of red snapper on paella made with Jabugo ham stock; teeny patties of exquisite beef crowned with coins of trembly foie. It's not exactly bargain basement, but it's worth every cent. Madrid on the (kind of) cheap still blows nearly every other city on earth out of the water.





TRY THIS

Bocadillo de calamares

Easy ● SERVES 2 ● 10 MINUTES

4 tbsp plain flour
4 tbsp cornflour
groundnut oil for frying
300g squid, cleaned and cut into rings
Sea salt flakes
4 tbsp mayonnaise
1 clove garlic, crushed
1 lemon, cut into wedges
Soft white rolls to serve

1 Put the flour and cornflour in a shallow bowl and season with salt and pepper and mix together. Fill a deep pan no more than 1/3 full with oil and heat until a cube of bread browns in 30 seconds.
2 Coat the squid in the flours then fry for 1-2 minutes until golden. Drain on kitchen paper. Mix the mayonnaise and garlic with a squeeze of lemon. Stuff the rolls with the squid rings and some garlic mayonnaise. Serve with a lemon wedge to squeeze over.

PER SERVING 639 kcals, protein 27.8g, carbs 56.2g, fat 33.5g, sat fat 5.7g, fibre 1.4g, salt 1.8g GF



TRAVEL DIARY

WHERE TO STAY

The award-winning Villa Magna Hotel is located in the heart of the city, in the posh Salamanca district, close to historical sights and shopping areas. The luxurious hotel combines classical elegance with contemporary comforts, and features several dining outlets, including an authentic Cantonese restaurant. Room rates start from around €290 per night (Dhs1,350), visit villamagna.es.

HOW TO GET THERE

Emirates offers direct flights from Dubai to Madrid, ticket prices start from around Dhs4,000. Visit emirates.com

Recipe photograph NICK KEANE | Styling: SARAH BIRKS | Food styling KATE CALDER



Fancy yourself as a PHOTOGRAPHER? Mad about taking PHOTOS on your hols?

Lonely Planet Traveller Middle East has partnered with **Radisson Royal hotel** and **flydubai** to bring you the UAE's most exciting travel photography competition! We're looking for the **best photographer in the UAE** in the following categories: **Nature**, **Landscape**, **People** and **Architecture**.

The winners will be included in our first travel photo exhibition, A Taste of Travel, which will be held from **14 February 2013** at the **Radisson Royal hotel, Sheikh Zayed Road. And one lucky winner will win a three night holiday to the historic, romantic city of Tbilisi, Georgia, staying at the five star Radisson Blu Iveria!**

A Taste of Travel will debut the best travel photography from Lonely Planet Traveller for the first time in the Middle East, and you could be a part of it!

To enter, all you have to do is upload your best photo to the app to either Lonely Planet Traveller Middle East or Radisson Royal's Facebook pages before Thursday 24 January 2013.

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T&Cs: Entrants must live in the UAE and be over 18. Both the three night hotel stay and flights are subject to availability and valid for six months. Please visit the Facebook page for full guidelines.

Bon Appétit experiences at Ruth's Chris Steak House

Emirates NBD's Bon Appétit club members enjoyed a relaxed evening, hosted by *BBC Good Food ME* at the elegant Ruth's Chris Steak House, The Address Dubai Marina, last month. Photographs CRIS MEJORADA

Steakhouses are aplenty in Dubai, but to find one that exudes a refined elegance and serves great steak as well as specialities that they pride themselves in, is rare. Ruth's Chris Steak House originated in New Orleans over 47 years ago and opened in Dubai in 2009. The award winning restaurant – Winner of the best steakhouse category at the 2010 *BBC Good Food ME* Awards – opened its second, bigger outlet at The Address Dubai Marina, earlier this year.

Around 50 guests – who are Emirates NBD card holders and loyal fans of the restaurant – were invited to the Emirates NBD Bon Appétit event as a way of thanking them. Guests sipped on refreshing white and red wines, as well as mojitos and Shirley temples, in the lounge area of the restaurant, while waiting for the interactive masterclass with Paul De Visser, executive chef of Ruth's Chris Steak House, to begin. They also enjoyed canapés such as shrimp cocktail and spicy chicken spring rolls before the class kicked off. The foodies then took a seat at the bar stools set all around, while some opted for the upstairs lounge area, giving them a balcony seat theatre-type of experience, and keeping them as close as possible to the action.

On the menu for the night was Blackened ahi tuna for starters; Filet Oscar style with crab cakes and sauce for mains; and a decadent Crème brulee for dessert. Each course was cooked in front of the audience and guests got to sample taster portions, while tempting aromas wafted through the restaurant. Many eager foodies had questions about the tuna, including how to achieve the required doneness and where to get certain ingredients, all of which were answered by the friendly chef; he also shared tips and tricks on what meats to choose when shopping when demonstrating the steak recipe."

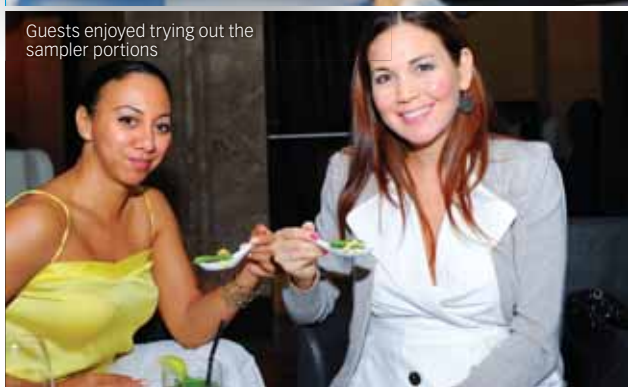
As soon as the crème brulee was cooked, guests devoured their samplers, and lingered around to speak to chef and some even opted to stay on to dine at the restaurant.

That's not all, two lucky guests also walked away with a Kenwood Kmix blender, and a dinner voucher from Ruth's Chris from the raffle draw at the end. Everyone enjoyed the evening thoroughly, if their feedback was anything to go by! According to Eileen Lee-Conor, one of the guests, "The main course was delicious! I've learnt so much this evening, from the way to present this dish as well as how to choose meat."

Nasser, a retired chef said, "I like learning new recipes all the time, it's great to try out something new and these are very easy to make." Another guest who also happens to be a Food Club member, Riz Sandford, added, "I was glad I got a seat on the upper lounge area which was so close to the cooking station. It was very entertaining watching him and you can see that Paul is very passionate about what he does."



Chef Paul De Visser cooked up a storm


Guests enjoyed trying out the sampler portions


The chef got interactive with the audience

Bon Appétit from Emirates NBD

The 'Bon Appétit Experience' is an extension of the 'Bon Appétit' programme that was launched last year by Emirates NBD, and enabled premium cardholders to enjoy exclusive discounts at over 600 restaurants in the UAE, when they use their Emirates NBD Debit or Credit Card.



One guest gets to come back to Ruth's Chris steakhouse with a dinner voucher prize



Guests picked up tips and hints from the expert



One lucky winner walked away with a Kenwood prize



Chef Paul De Visser shows us how to recreate one of his recipes at home:

Blackened ahi tuna

SERVES 4

320g Ahi tuna
4 tsp blackening seasoning or cajun spice.
50ml canola oil
120ml mustard sauce
FOR THE MUSTARD SAUCE
40g dry mustard
30g dijon mustard
220ml kikkoman soy sauce
175ml non alcoholic beer

1 In two separate plates, place oil in one and the cajun spice in the other. Dip all sides of the tuna into the oil and then into the spice.
2 Place tuna into a clean cast iron skillet and briefly sear for approximately 20 seconds on each side. Blacken on all sides and make sure fish is a bit rare and not cooked through completely.
3 To make the mustard sauce, mix both the mustards to make a smooth paste. Add soy sauce and whip to make a mustard paste. Slowly add in the non alcoholic beer and mix well.
4 To plate, place the ahi tuna on cutting board and slice into 8 even pieces with a very sharp knife. Slide the knife under the tuna and place all pieces on the platter
5 Using a squeeze bottle, drizzle the mustard sauce around the tuna and serve.

Festive canapés

At our latest Food Club event held at the newly opened Jashanmal store at The Dubai Mall, members were treated to coffee and canapés, after which Chef Andy Campbell demonstrated how to prepare a canapé-style menu to serve at a holiday gathering. Members not only picked up valuable tips and tried out sampler portions, but also enjoyed a 30 per cent shopping discount on the night, plus goodie bags including a baking tin – just in time for festive season! One lucky raffle draw winner also walked away with a gift voucher from Jashanmal.

Photographs ANAS CHERUR



Chef Andy in action



Guests watched with rapt attention



Guests enjoyed trying the canapés



A fun time for foodies



Chef Andy was happy to share his pro tips



One lucky guest won a voucher from Jashanmal in the raffle draw

Homemade lamb burgers

MAKES 20

1 kg lamb shoulder
1 onion, minced
2 cloves garlic, minced
Ginger, grated
1 bunch coriander, washed, picked and chopped
1 tsp each of coriander and cumin seeds, toasted and ground
Salt and black pepper to taste
½ tsp turmeric
1 green chili, deseeded and chopped
FOR THE SPICED WHOLE MEAL ROLLS
225g whole meal flour
225g strong flour
2 tsp salt
1 tsp ground cumin
½ tsp ground black pepper
275ml hot water
2 tsp yeast
1 tsp butter
Pinch of brown flour, for dusting
Pinch of sugar
FOR THE YOGHURT AND MINT DRESSING
Bunch of mint
Juice of ½ a lemon
4 tbsp olive oil
150ml full fat yoghurt
Salt and pepper, to taste
A pinch of Kashmiri chilli powder
FOR THE RED PEPPER MAYONNAISE
1 red pepper, roasted
4 tbsp mayonnaise, to mix
A few drops of lemon juice, to taste
1 clove of garlic
½ tsp smoked paprika
FOR THE SPICED AUBERGINE AND GREEN TAHINI DRESSING
2 small aubergines, cut length wise, criss crossed in the middle and salted
1 tbsp of bharat spice mix
4 tbsp each of coriander leaves and tahini, blended with lemon juice and olive oil
1 tbsp red vinegar, to taste
A handful of basil leaves
Pumpkin seeds and pomegranate seeds to garnish



1 Mince the lamb with all the ingredients together to combine. Divide into balls and flatten on both sides.
2 To make the rolls, dissolve the yeast with the sugar in half the water. Let it froth up. Mix all the ingredients in a mixing bowl for 5 mins.
3 Turn dough out onto a floured surface and divide into 12 balls. Place them onto a greased baking sheet and cover with an oiled plastic bag. Set aside for 40 mins, in a warm place in the kitchen and let them double in size. Sprinkle a little brown flour. Cook in a preheated oven set at 220C for about 20 -25 mins and cool on a wire rack.
4 To make the yoghurt and mint dressing, blend the mint and lemon with olive oil. Add the yoghurt and mix well. Season and add a pinch of chilli powder. Set aside.
5 To make the red pepper mayonnaise, blend all ingredients until smooth.
6 Sprinkle the spices over the aubergines and grill till cooked.
7 Grill the burgers, making sure the lamb is thoroughly cooked. Cut the buns in half and toast the insides. Cover one half with red pepper mayo and the other with minted yoghurt. Place the grilled aubergines on the side and drizzle red vinegar and tahini dressing. Garnish with pomegranate and pumpkin seeds, and serve.



Chocolate and poached pear tartlets with honeycomb ice cream

MAKES 20

500g dark chocolate buttons
250g butter, unsalted
200ml cream, warm
20 tartlet shells
FOR THE POACHED PEAR
2 pears, peeled
½l water
250g sugar
Packet of mulled spices (Available at Spinneys)

1 Melt the butter and chocolate together, stir in the cream and whisk. Set aside.
2 Heat the water in a pot, and simmer pears with all other ingredients for 5 mins or until it becomes soft.
3 Pour the chocolate into the tartlet shells, garnish with poached pears and honey comb ice cream. GF

JASHANMAL جاشنمال

Luxury home store Jashanmal offers everything from crockery and cuttlery to crystalware and kitchen appliances, from various leading brands. Check out their largest and newly opened flagship store, that spreads across 15,000 square feet, on the first level at The Dubai Mall. Call 04-3253808 or visit www.jashanmalgroup.com for more information on the various outlets in the region.





WIN!

Weekend getaway package for **two** **at Yas Island Rotana** worth over **Dhs5,000**

1 lucky winner can get a two night stay for two, in a classic suite, inclusive of breakfast and lunch!

Located at the stunning Yas Island, Yas Island Rotana hotel is just a few steps away from the Formula 1 race track, the Links golf club, the Yas southern marina, and the capital's most talked about adventure theme park, Ferrari World Abu Dhabi. The hotel offers a peaceful setting, and facilities such as a jacuzzi, outdoor temperature-controlled swimming pool, sauna and steam rooms, tennis courts and a fitness centre, all of which ensure a relaxing and luxurious weekend. The winner will get a two night stay for two, with breakfast and lunch at Choices restaurant.

Scan this QR code to go straight to our website.

Log on bbcgoodfoodme.com to enter this competition and simply answer this question:

What is the name of the award winning steakhouse at Yas Island Rotana?

*Terms & conditions apply. Employees of Corporate Publishing International are not eligible to enter. Winners will be selected on random basis from correct entries. Flights are not included in this prize.



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In next month's issue

The healthy issue



Fabulously fishy!

Simple recipes for nutritious fish suppers.

Drink to your health!

Herbal teas for enhanced wellbeing





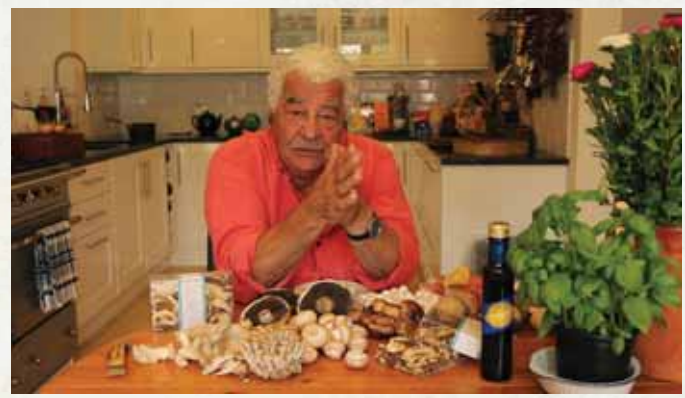
Spa getaways

Start the new year with a complete body detox at a luxury spa resort.

Diet diaries

Healthy meal deliveries reviewed.





Up close & personal

A chat with the Godfather of Italian cuisine, Antonio Carluccio.

Have you joined our *Food Club?*

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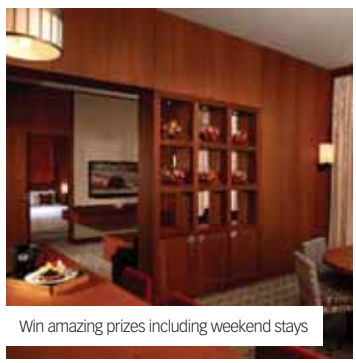
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- **Exclusive invitations to culinary masterclasses led by top chefs in the UAE**
- **Access to exciting competitions**
- **Weekly email newsletters packed with food news, views and recipes**
- **A loyalty card which gives you fantastic discounts**


Learn to master delicious dishes


Learn from the pros


Get cooking with top chefs of the UAE


Win amazing prizes including weekend stays


Sample tasty bites at the Masterclasses


Enjoy discounts at various restaurants

Visit **www.bbcgoodfoodme.com** and sign up today.

What they said

Feedback from our Food Club members:

"Huge compliments to the team for a stunning Masterclass event. They are presented so professionally and are a fantastic showcase for the chefs and their restaurants." – *Paul Conroy*

"Thank you for the invitation to the Masterclass. We really enjoyed ourselves and look forward to replicating the menu when we next have friends over." – *Liz Sandford*

"Just wanted to say thanks very much for another wonderful, educational and tasty evening. My husband and I are very grateful to be able to attend these events." – *Annette Duke*

Present your Food Club membership card at these outlets to receive a **fabulous discount!**





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MELIA DUBAI
This Bur Dubai hotel is known for its popular restaurants Titanic by Marco Pierre White, and Signature by Sanjeev Kapoor.

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RITZ CARLTON DIFC
The glamorous hotel in the heart of the city has three fine-dining outlets: Center Cut, Can Can Brasseire and Blue Rain.

Discount: 20% off food at all outlets.
www.ritzcarlton.com



MEDIA ONE HOTEL
This modern hotel in Dubai Media City offers contemporary dining outlets including Café M, Z:One and The Deck on 8.

Discount: 20% off F&B at all outlets
www.mediaonehotel.com



MOVENPICK BUR DUBAI
Located in central Dubai, the hotel's outlets include authentic North Indian restaurant Chutneys, and Fountain.

Discount: 20% off food only
www.moevenpick-hotels.com



AL RAHA BEACH HOTEL
Set on the corniche, the hotel's outlets are Sevilla, Azur, Café Mozart, Black Pearl Bazar, Enigma, Wanasah and Al Manzil.

Discount: 25% off F&B at all outlets
www.danathotels.com



LE ROYAL MERIDIEN ABU DHABI
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This Abu Dhabi hotel's restaurants include LaPiazza, Harvesters Pub, Chequers, Tipar Bar and Cappucino Royal Café.

Discount: 25% off F&B at all outlets
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TILAL LIWA HOTEL
Located amidst secluded dunes off the Rub Al Khali desert, the hotel's resturants are Al Badiya, Layali Bar; and Al Liwan.

Discount: 25% off F&B outlets
www.danathotels.com

*Terms & conditions apply.

Competitions

Fabulous prizes, from dining vouchers to event passes, up for grabs.



WIN! DINING VOUCHERS WORTH DHS2,500 FROM BENIHANA, AMWAJ ROTANA

6 lucky winners can feast on a variety of Japanese specialties at the theme night Kuidaore – a concept that has been brought over from Osaka, which translates into 'eat-till-you-drop'. Sushi lovers can tuck into everything from fresh sashimi, maki and other sushi rolls.

WIN! FRIDAY BRUNCH AT NOMAD, JUMEIRAH CREEKSIDE HOTEL WORTH OVER DHS3,000.

Dine at the delightful brunch that offers an East meets West culinary experience. Four lucky winners can take a guest and book a picnic space out on the lush greens, or sit indoors, and relish grills and hot foods at the live cooking stations. Kids can feed ducks and paint their faces while adults relax and enjoy their weekend afternoon.



WIN! 2-PC WENGER CARVING SET WORTH DHS2,100

Carve this year's Christmas turkey with this stylish two piece carving set from Wenger. 12 lucky winners will get a chance to try out the razor-sharp Grand Maître® knife and meat fork – perfect for home chefs who prefer precision cuts for their meats.







WIN! A COOKING CLASS WORTH DHS750, AT TOP CHEF COOKING STUDIO.

Two lucky winners will get a chance to learn how to cook up a gourmet meal, under head chef Hadrien Villedieu's guidance, at this stylish cooking school, then sit down to enjoy the fruits of their labour at the dining room.



WIN! WEEKEND BBQ AT RIVINGTON GRILL SOUK MADINAT JUMEIRAH, WORTH DHS1,500.

One lucky person can win a table for four at the Rivington weekend barbecue. Chill outdoors, while taking in the views of the Madinat Jumeirah waterways, and sipping wines and spirits while tucking into British-style barbecue foods.

WIN! DINING VOUCHER AT ROMANO'S MACARONI GRILL, WORTH DHS500.

One winner can grab two friends and head to this Italian eatery, to savour comfort foods such as chicken parmigiana, baked pastas and a variety of appetisers and desserts.





WIN! BRUNCH AT MAZINA, THE ADDRESS DUBAI MARINA, WORTH OVER DHS400.

Embrace the festivities at the Generation creation Saturday family brunch, by decorating a gingerbread house with edible sweets. One lucky winner can experience this fun activity with a partner, and treat themselves to the food offerings at the buffet.

WIN! MEAL VOUCHERS FROM JW MARRIOTT HOTEL DUBAI, WORTH DHS450.

Two lucky winners can celebrate Christmas in style with their partner, by indulging in an Italian 3-course set menu lunch at Cucina restaurant, on Christmas day.



To stand a chance to win these prizes, visit our competitions page on www.bbcgoodfoodme.com, or simply scan this QR code with your mobile to go directly to the website, and answer the simple questions.

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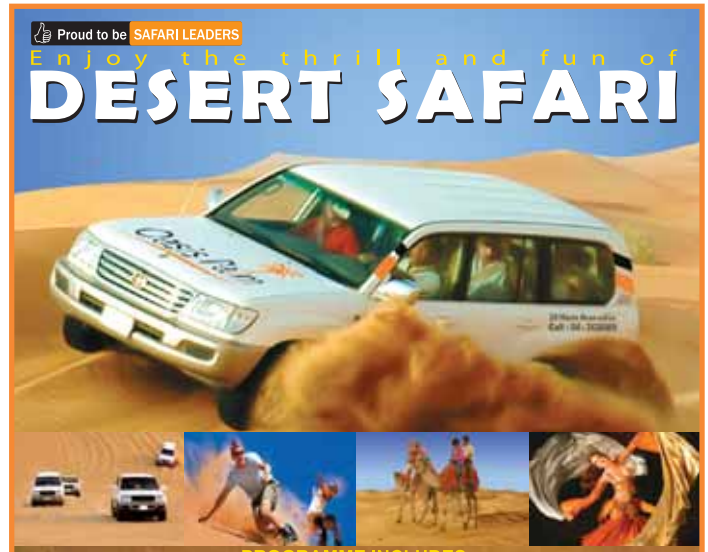


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Meet the **blogger**

Helping you connect to the UAE'S foodie community, one blog post at a time.

FRANCINE SPIERING has been globe-trotting ever since she left Amsterdam 15 years ago. Having lived in Cairo, Malaysia and New Orleans, she settled down in Dubai in 2010 – the same year she launched her blog, Life in the Food Lane. The 49-year old lives in Meadows with her husband and son, and has always had a passion for food, having trained at Le Cordon Bleu in Paris, and worked in catering before becoming a full-time blogger.

About the blog

I love the diversity of food, its social elements and enjoyable entry points into a different culture, heritage or lifestyle. With Life in the Food Lane, I wanted it to be a way of sharing my admiration for the amazing food and cultural diversity that I come across. The blog began over two years ago as a reflection of what I find in my 'food lane', a virtual food tasting to join in on, with experiences from the past and present. On the blog you'll find recipes from various cuisines, foodie experiences from my travels, as well as ways to use ingredients and produce that people don't normally cook with – such as quail, zucchini flower, beef tongue and octopus.



Top cooking tips

- Before making a soup or puree, roast vegetables like pumpkin, beetroot and carrot, to get a natural caramelisation and rich flavour. All you need to do is add stock, blend, add a drizzle of white truffle oil for a rich, creamy soup.
- When cooking with vegetables such as zucchini and fennel, steep them for an hour or so in olive oil, lemon juice, and salt flakes. This softens the vegetables, but gives it a crunch at the same time.
- Save leftovers, even if it's just a spoonful. A little sauce or some braised meat may not be enough to make another meal by itself, but can sure lift up your next meal.

Culinary icons

The culinary genius **Ferran Adria**! His pioneering work and revolutionary techniques evokes all senses and helps me discover the ultimate taste of food.

"One thing I love about my nomadic lifestyle is the exposure to different food cultures and cuisines."

Cookbook you are currently reading

Polpo, A Venetian Cookbook (of sorts) by Russell Norman (Bloomsbury Publishing) – this book makes me want to book a ticket to Venice instantly. I'm also reading Anna del Conte's *Risotto with Nettles* (Vintage), which brings to life the images and memories of her time in Milan pre-war, that are all written with a food-perspective.

Favourite foodie destination

I went to the white truffle market in Alba, Piemonte, Italy (I was in Turin at the end of October for the Salone del Gusto Terra Madre, Slow Food's international food fair). The smells, sounds and bustle – an unbelievable experience!

Favourite restaurants

FOR BREAKFAST: The cultural breakfast in Bastakiya's cultural centre.

FOR LUNCH: Singapore Deli Café, for their laksa and fried nasi goreng, Appa Kadai for the fluffy appams and Calicut Paragon for the curries and vegetables served on a banana leaf.

FOR DINNER: I love Reflets par Pierre Gagnaire for its creativity and Table 9 for being the closest thing to a high quality chef-patron restaurant that I know of in Dubai.



My **Ultimate** meal

I'd like the world on my plate, from a curry laksa with fresh seafood and aromatic herbs, to a tasty selection of mezze. My favourite ingredients-based dish is one that combines golden chantarelle, Jerusalem artichokes and slow-braised duck.



Midday fix

I try to stick to fruits and healthy snacks, but find it hard to resist a crispy hot spicy samosa.



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